THE GENERAL

INEFFICACY

AND

INSINCERITY

Of a Late, Or

Death-Bed Repentance.

WITH

Earneſteſt Diſſuaſives from committing our Eternal Condition to that Unſpeakable Hazard.

AND

A full Reſolution of the Caſe, how far a *Death-Bed Repentance* is poſſible, to be Sincere and Effectual.

By T. Beverley.

ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ, ἄχρις τοῦ, τὸ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ καλεῖται.

To Day, whilſt it is called, to Day; Leſt any one be hardned through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, Heb. 3. 7, 13.

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THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

IT may ſeem unſeaſonable, and moroſe, to deny the value of any kind of Repentance, in ſuch an Age as this; wherein there is a Generation ariſen, Oh how lofty are their Eyes, and their Eye-lids lifted up with Scorn and Diſdain of all Religion! An Age ſo irreligious, that it ſeems neceſſary to gather up all the Fragments, tho but of a ſeeming Piety, and make the moſt of them, rather than to call things to ſo ſtrict a Ballance: A thinner, and more dilute Repentance, than would formerly have admitted a Man into a viſible Church, may at

ſuch a time as this, hope for Heaven.

To all this I muſt anſwer, First, *The Looſeneſs of an Age does not ſlacken or diſſolve Eternal Laws; Wiſdom abates nothing of its price, of that timely and early ſearch after it, whether Men think good to give it, or whether they will forbear. It hath no meaner Eſteem of it ſelf, becauſe Folly, that is, ſimple, and knoweth nothing, ſitteth upon the high places of the City, full of Noiſe and Clamor, and entices to its Entertainments the Multitude, and Grandeur of the World.*

All the Severities of Scripture, that make the way to Heaven narrow, and the Gate ſtrait, ſtand like a Rock, from Generation to Generation, alike in all times. Nothing that is prodigally looſed on Earth, in compliance with a licentious Age, will be therefore looſed in Heaven.

The goodly price of a Death-Bed Repentance, *at which God is priz'd by Men, even then, when Religion is at the loweſt, is rejected oftest with Indigna-*

tion,

tion, and the everlaſting State purchaſed by it, may be ſadly called an Aceldama, a Field of Blood.

If this Severity of Divine Truth offend any one, The Reſolution is that of our Saviour. † *Every Plant, whether Perſon or Thing, that our Heavenly Father hath not planted, ſhall be rooted up.*

† Mat. 15. 17.

2. *It is no improbable way of Conteſting againſt Atheiſm, and general Irreligion, by the ſtrict Doctrins of Chriſtianity, as well as by Arguments of Reaſon: Nay, Authoritative Applications of the Truth of God, often ſtrike the Conſcience within the Reaſon, ſooner and quicker than induſtrious Attempts upon the Reaſon: as Lightning melts the Steel, and neglects the Scabbard. Preſſings of Faith, Repentance, Holineſs, Eternal Judgment make Men (even Unbelievers) fall down upon their faces, when the Secrets of their Hearts are diſcovered, and confeſs God is there*

For the Soul of Man is more easily wrought upon by those domestick Rebukes, God gives it by his Word, than by more solemn Treaties.

Especially, corrupted Reason takes upon it self to be a lawful Authority, when an honourable War is commenced against it by the better Reason on the other side; It contemns Laws of Discourse, as precarious, and makes account, it gives Reason for Reason. But the Rod of God shaken over it makes it tremble, and confess it self a Slave: Thus the Slaves in the Story were more easily reduced by the servile Chastisements they were acquainted with, than by the force of Armies. Atheism grows the prouder generally for being reasoned with: It does but dissemble, while it pretends its disease to be in the Head, which it knows indeed to be in the sensual Heart. And therefore is pleased to be struck in the Head; but cannot endure to be wounded in the Heart, which the Word of God especially aims at.

Not,

Not, but that it is indeed a moſt generous and honourable Atchievement to ſhew Religion to be the higheſt Reaſon; and to detect thoſe pretending Sons of Reaſon, of the greateſt Irrationality. But it is ſtill to be acknowledged, the plain preaching of the Goſpel, which the Apoſtle calls the Fooliſhneſs and Weakneſs of God, is alone wiſer and ſtronger than Men: The Reaſon of that, couched under an Heavenly Authority of Truth, carries thoſe τὰ ὅπλα δυνατὰ, *thoſe mighty Weapons, whereby every high Imagination and Reaſoning is to be ſubdued, that lifts up it ſelf againſt God.*

Upon this occaſion, I cannot, but bewail thoſe unhappy Diviſions, that have ſeparated the Preachers of the Goſpel one from another, and thereby opened a Lane for that Black Troop to advance in, and made the Trumpet of the Goſpel to ſound ſo incertainly, that it hath rather ſcattered Men, than prepared them to the Battel.

Our Saviour foreſeeing the Conſequences hereof, according to that great Maxim of his, ‖ Every Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf is brought to Deſolation, *did ſo earneſtly command Unity and Love of one another to his Diſciples in general, and more particularly to the Miniſters of his Word, as the moſt effectual Demonſtration;* † *He was ſent from God, and his Doctrin from Heaven.*

‖ Mat. 12.25.

† Joh. 17.21.

From whence it follows, where ever this Union is broken, Chriſtianity is liable to the Imputations of being a great Cheat and Fraud. Upon which advantage loathſome Irreligion enters, and ſpreads it ſelf in thoſe empty ſpaces, begotten by our Diſtances, and removes from one another: All diviſions in Chriſtianity are Scandals to it, and weaken it. This we ſee verified in our days; the differences in Religion, and the prophane ſcorn or ſtupid neglect of it, being alike viſible, and notorious throughout the Nation.

Yet

Yet upon juſt Accounts: the Irreligion conſequent upon Diviſions in Religion, turns to the advantage of Chriſtianity, that thus it muſt be, elſe how ſhould the Scriptures be fulfilled? But this abates nothing of the Sinfulneſs and Unhappineſs, or Neceſſity of Amendment.

To guide us then into that; It is very obſervable, the venom of this Diſtemper falls not ſo much upon the ſeveral Parties in Religion, as upon Religion it ſelf; while we wound *one another, Religion is the* Martyr, *lies a bleeding, and even dying. And while good Men lament it, the Enemies of it* make merry and ſend † gifts *one to another, in token of Triumph.*

† Rev. 11. 10.

The method of Cure therefore, is not, for every Party to weigh up it ſelf, and preſs down others, but to buoy up Religion it ſelf; and that is beſt done, by Preaching and living the very Thing, *without diſtinction of Names. If we did but yield it its own Integrity and Univerſal Goodneſs, it would ſoon riſe*

riſe into that Honour it hath loſt, by being captivated to Opinions.

For as our human Nature would be much more beautiful and happy, if cemented by that Philanthropy, *or general love of Mankind, ſo indearingly charged upon us by our Saviour; who demonſtrated, that he embraced within his own Immenſity, the whole latitude of our Nature; without contracting it into the narrowneſs of a human Perſon, by the great care he took; That this Nature ſhould not be diſhonoured, abuſed, and torn by it ſelf through that bitter Cenſoriouſneſs, Revenge, and Contempt, Men exerciſe upon one another, even there where Chriſt is profeſſed.*

So would our Chriſtianity, that is now evil ſpoken of, appear, as it is in it ſelf, Acceptable to God, and approved of Men, if we could unite in thoſe comprehenſive Intereſts of Righteouſneſs, Peace, Joy in the Holy-Ghoſt, that ſubſtantial Chriſtianity; Thoſe healing Wings of the Sun of Righteouſneſs,

teouſneſs, in the Rays of which our little differences about Meat and Drink would play up and down, as ſmalleſt Motes of Human Frailty, eaſily obtaining a mutual Pardon; and that black and moſt abhorred Vapor of Irreligion, be forced to diſlodge at ſo Illuſtrious a Preſence.

If there be any Intereſt to keep afoot theſe Diviſions, it is an Intereſt of Diſhonour, that dares not name it ſelf; it is not only, δυδὲν ὑποθέσει; *but* τῇ κοιλίᾳ. *It is not barely to ſerve an Opinion, (much leſs the Lord Jeſus) but the Belly.*

3. *But to return from whence I have digreſſed, upon ſo great a Cauſe. Laſtly, we may find, in the very Notion of a* Death-Bed Repentance, *enough to defend the ſeaſonableneſs of this Diſcourſe, notwithſtanding ſpreading Irreligion. For it imports a deſign to Dye well: and we ſee very* Few, *and* thoſe Few *deprived of the common* Modeſty and Sobriety of Mankind; *and who thereupon become an horrid*

rid Story, but dye at leaſt in a fair and calm Temper towards Religion. Now if we join to this, that of many Millions for one, every one dies as he lives, not only as the Tree falls, ſo it lies; but as it hath inclined along its growth, ſo it falls. How great is the neceſſity then of living well, that we may dye well! For this Death-Bed Repentance, *that riſes and ſets at the ſame time, generally proves but a falling Star. That Repentance only wheels orderly into a higher Orb, that hath given proof; it was a true Light, by ſhining here for ſome conſiderable ſpace.*

A good Death receives Being from a holy Life, elſe there is not ſuch a thing in Nature, no not in Grace, except by Miracle of Grace.

Thus far I have made Apology for the Seaſonableneſs of this Diſcourſe. In the Diſcourſe it ſelf, I am not conſcious of having wandred from the Univerſal Doctrin of Divines in this Point; except it ſhould ſeem too high a ſtrain to place this Repentance,

(when

(when true) among Miracles. To juſtifie that, I have the warrant of Sacred Story, the Dying Convert, *which being the only Example of ſuch a one in Holy Writ, was in the days of the Meſſias,* that great Period of Miracles, *ſingled out upon that greateſt occaſion,* viz. *To diſplay the power of the dying Mediator, to forgive Sins, not only upon Earth, but in his loweſt Humiliation, his very deſcent into Hell; which argues it a very great Miracle.*

Yet I have not truſted the weight of the Diſcourſe to any thing that looks like a private Opinion; *but to moſt avowed Principles, and have therefore reſerved my particular Senſe as the Concluſion of the whole.*

I have only to add, there is a National late Repentance, as appears by the Unſuccesfulneſs of that unparallell'd † *Reformation of* Joſiah; *ſincere indeed in him, and of full Effect: but not in the Body of the*

† 2 Kings 23. 26. and 24. 3, 4.

Jewiſh

Jewiſh Nation, as appeared by their Relapſes under the following Kings; and therefore, notwithſtanding that ſeeming Return, the Lord turned not from the Fierceneſs of his Wrath, wherewith his Anger was kindled againſt Judah, *for its guilt in the Sins of* Manaſſeh; *which the Lord would not Pardon, and therefore would not give a true Repentance of thoſe Evils, they had ſo long continued in, againſt all the early Admonitions of the Prophets:* This is the juſt Parallel of a Death-Bed Repentance.

The due Application of all theſe Conſiderations, to every one, into whoſe hands they may fall, is the earneſt and affectionate Prayer of,

T. B.

THE GENERAL INEFFICACY AND INSINCERITY OF A Death-bed Repentance, &c.

Luk. 23. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43. *And one of the Malefactors that were hanged with him, railed on him; saying, if thou be the Christ, save thy self and us. But the other answering; said, dost thou not fear God? Seeing that thou art in the same condemnation. And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord remember me, when thou comest into thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him; verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

THE generality of Men that have been at all acquainted with the name of Repentance, and understood in any Measure the importance and signification of the thing, acknowledge it beyond all dispute necessary: Yet they allow them-

themſelves a leiſure for the Performance of it, and ſuch a leiſure as ſwallows the whole time of Life, and leaves only the laſt and loweſt part of it, for the diſcharge of ſo great a Buſineſs; ſo that their Repentance, if any at all, falls out to be a *Death-bed Repentance.*

The inconveniencies of which are unexpreſſibly great, becauſe the lives of Men are left naked of that Holineſs and Purity, that ſhould adorn them, and all over blotted with Sin and Vanity. Their Converſation wants *that light of good Works, that ſhould ſhine before Men, and glorifie God in Heaven. Their Life is without form, and void, and darkneſs is upon the face of it.* And in the end they are caſt upon the great Sea of Eternity, as in a Veſſel of Paper, a thin and ſuperficial Repentance.

It is therefore moſt neceſſary to uſe all means, to ſhew the Inſufficiency of this Refuge, which moſt of thoſe, that live in common under the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, deſign while they live to fly to when betimes they dye. To demoliſh *this Houſe upon the Sand*; that Men may not by hopes of ſhelter at it, conceived long before hand, be kept off from laying *their Foundation upon a Rock*; which poſſibly they would do, if theſe hopes were cut off.

And becauſe this piece of Sacred Story hath been generally taken, as an Inſtance of great Favour to a late Converſion, not that it is indeed ſo, but that it ſeems to be ſo, let it be the Ground of the preſent Diſcourſe.

For I obſerve Divines, in their Doctrin concerning the danger of a Dying Repentance, are careful to wreſt out of the hand of preſuming Imagination,

tion, this Example, and to allay the vain Confidence built upon it.

Indeed the Miſtake of it is very fatal, ſeeing if it be duly conſidered, there is nothing more forcible againſt what it is pretended for, than it. It is true, it is a Relation of a dying Man returning from great Sins to God; but ſo circumſtantiated, ſo defended on all hands againſt Boldneſs upon it, that there might have been more reaſon to hope well of Laſt-Breath-Penitencies, if there had not been a Pattern of ſuch a one in all Points, as much above the imitiation of thoſe of our days, as the Heaven is above the Earth. It is ſuch a one, as if God had ſaid of it, if I accept a Dying Repentance; behold this, conſider it every way, and take notice by it, what a one I will have it. God putting the Caſe, and reſolving it thus, hath given a much more poſitive Determination concerning it, than if the Caſe had never been put.

Ante mihi fidem latronis oſtende, & tunc tibi latronis beatitudinem policere. Auguſt.

The End therefore I aim at, is to make it evident upon general Reaſons, and particularly from this Inſtance.

That a *Death-bed Repentance* is a hazard ſo unſpeakably great, that no Man can without Folly extreamly prodigious commit to ſo much adventure an affair of ſo great importance to an eternal condition.

Hereunto I will raiſe this Treaty by theſe degrees.

1. By obſerving the Judgment of Divines concerning this Caſe, and ballancing the moſt favourable with the more ſevere.

2. By detecting the Follies that have given a Reputation to a *Death-Bed Repentance*.

3. By examining the moſt hopeful Appearances of this kind of Repentance, and ſhewing there are plain Cauſes of them very much below the Nature of true Repentance, wherewith I will compare them.

4. By obſerving the Extraordinaries, of which the Repentance of this Dying Malefactor was compoſed, becauſe of which it can hardly be drawn into a Precedent.

To all theſe I will ſubjoin preſſing Conſiderations on every ſide; that Men ſhould not delay their return to God, to the latter Times of Life.

Dr. Taylor's *Invalidity of a late Repentance.*

For the Firſt, the Judgment of Divines in the Point, I begin with that ſeverer one; yet built upon great Piety and Reaſon, that aſſerts it a plainly impoſſible thing, a Man on his Death-Bed ſhould Repent with that Repentance, the Scripture ſo oft Diſcourſes of, and promiſes Pardon to, and threatens the neglect of, with Periſhing; and therefore concludes, a Dying Man that hath not already repented, muſt needs fall, not into the Sin of Deſpair: For who is bound to hope, that hath not the reaſons of his hope given him by God? but into the Miſery of Deſpair: For how miſerable is he whom God hath left to the boiling Sea of his own Horrors, and thrown him out no Anchor of Hope?

However this Sentence ſeem rigorous, yet when we conſider the ponderous Arguments it uſes, it may rather amaze us, than provoke our Cenſure: For Firſt, it is very irreconcileable with the Glory of God, that Men who have had the knowledge of God, and been called upon all their Lives to give up

up themſelves to him, ſhould be accepted, when they pour out to him the Lees and Dregs of Life, inſtead of the generous Spirits of it. That he that hath had in his Flock a Male, ſhould vow, and Sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt Thing, and yet eſcape the Curſe of the Deceiver. The Expreſſions of Scripture are innumerable in which God Diſavows ſuch Proſtitutions of his Grace, (as is hereafter to be urged) but ſeals ſuch, e're they are aware, under Hardneſs of Heart, and a Reprobate Senſe, to Deſtruction.

2. It appears impoſſible, there ſhould be a diſcharge of the Duties of Repentance, when Men are a Dying; that they ſhould draw within the hollow of that little Span, that is alſo otherwiſe incumbred, the vaſtneſs of that Action, that is neceſſary to take off the Brawn of a long Impenitency.

That a Man ſhould live the life of Holineſs that is juſt a Dying; that the Tree that hath been always barren, ſhould bring forth good Fruit, now it is a hewing down: Theſe things are very contradictious; how can Repentance plant it ſelf in the Soul, and ſettle gracious habits there in ſo ſhort a ſpace? Or in an inſtant by Mortification root out thoſe Luſts, and ſinful Affections, that have been many years eating into the Heart? Repentance muſt have a time for Fruits, and thoſe Fruits for Ripening and Concoction, which a Death-Bed will not afford: So that it cannot be *that Repentance of the Goſpel*, but at the beſt, only ſome firſt ſtrokes of it.

3. There muſt be a living to God before a Man dyes to God. It is the Supream Law, every one muſt *glorifie him here on Earth, and finiſh the work he hath given them to do in the World.* They muſt

work the works of him that ſent them while it is day, before the night cometh, in which no Man can work. After this Men are received into the glory of God.

4. In Repentance, we muſt be in the ſame Circumſtances of Temptation we were in, in the time of Sinning. But it will be hard to find in what the ſtate of a Dying Man differs from that of him, that is already dead, as to this buſineſs of Repentance; but that he may as well be allowed to Repent, that is entred into Eternity, as he that ſtands on the very brink of it.

This Cenſure cannot be injurious to Men living, and in their full Opportunity; ſuppoſe in Speculation, it ſtretches Principles of great weight and truth too far, yet it recompenſes for it ſelf by the wholeſomneſs of it to practice; for who can ſuffer by being neceſſitated to an early Repentance, ſo much his Duty, ſo much his Safety?

Further it is moſt Prophetick, moſt undoubtedly true of moſt Mens late Repentance; That it is too ſudden, too Muſhrom a Birth to have any worthineſs in it. This Repentance almoſt univerſally withers afore it grows up, and proves an Abortion; whether it comes to the tryal of a longer Life, wherein it vaniſhes as a Cloud, and former Impiety returns; or whether it paſs immediately into Eternity, where it ſinks down into Miſery; for attempting the Regions of Life, and wanting the Purity that riſes thither, it is beaten back with all its Pretenſions, as a Foggy Exhalation, that would climb to Heaven, but is forced down, and made to reſt below; ſo that for the Univerſality of *Death-Bed Repentances* this Judgment is truly calculated.

If

If it ſhould ſeem too Cruel to the dying Condition, to ſmother Men alive with the ſecond Death, (as *Hazael* ſpread upon the dying King a thick Cloath dipped in Water) to ſtifle and benum at once all motions towards God, let us conſider what advice it offers againſt the Stupidities of Deſpair.

When we are fallen into ſo unhappy a Condition, that the whole weight of Eternity depends upon a very little Moment; it perſwades Men would do all they can in return to God, though that all muſt be truſted with the Prerogative of Mercy; for that Mercy which is ſtated in the Promiſes of the Goſpel, and is in ordinary, cannot help them in the great point of Salvation, however it may alleviate their Condemnation, and leſſen their Torment.

I mad add, if that which appears a Meſſenger of Death ſhould have ſecret reprieve in its Inſtructions, and what ſeems a Death-bed, prove only a Diſcipline: It may be a happy beginning of a true Repentance to him, who lives, after his being near the Grave, to perfect it, according to that of *Job*, 33. *ver.* 22, 23.

Thus this Opinion doth not cut off the Action of its deſperate Perſon; and if by that Action, he paſs *the needles Eye*, and get through the *ſtrait Gate* of Repentance and Regeneration, it will be able to give him no Reſiſtance: For thoſe to whom the *two-leav'd Gates* of Faith and Repentance open, this Air of Diſcourſe cannot bar, that they ſhould not enter into life.

But on the other ſide, they that are confident, and make themſelves ſure of Repentance and Mercy; cannot when they meet the ſolid Obſtacles of things, force their way by the Breath of their Mouth;

but they and their intended Repentance are together locked up in the cloſeneſs and compactedneſs of thoſe Decrees; Firſt; They cannot Repent, Then they cannot be Saved.

To conclude; let ſuch a Deciſion of this Caſe be never ſo auſtere, it is a thouſand times more Juſt than the delay of our return to God in the Contemplation of doing it at the laſt can be; and the Reaſons upon which it is planted, are ſuch, that though they may not reach the height deſigned, yet do they exclude thouſands from Eternal Happineſs; and although they may not make good the Complement of the Cenſure, yet are they of ſo awful a regard, and ſo worthy of all Obſervation, that they are moſt vehemently to be preſſed to the main ſcope; that Men would by no means truſt to this Extreme Repentance, to which purpoſe I ſhall hereafter take further advantage of them.

But let us come to that tenderer apprehenſion of the generality of Divines, with which I will concur, that all things of Opinion and Diſpute may be taken away in ſo great a Point. Let it then be allowed, that a *Death-Bed Repentance* is no impoſſibility.

Firſt, in regard of infinite Mercy, that cannot be limited, but by it ſelf: Now long Impenitency, though it be often doomed irrevocably by God in particular Generations of Men, or Perſons; yet is it not that Sin, that *ſhall never be forgiven*. Nor is it upon that account, that the Scripture ſaith of ſome; *It is impoſſible to renew them to Repentance*. So that though there be many Examples of ſuch Impenitency, that have proved in the Event unpardonable, yet not from the preciſe Nature of the thing

it ſelf: We may rather believe, that as the unmeaſurable Being of God hath delighted it ſelf in ſo many varieties and gradations of the Creatures down from Angels to the darkeſt foot-ſteps of himſelf in the World; ſo the unſearchable Riches of his Grace are made known in all kinds of Pardons. As therefore it hath choſen ſome of the worſt of Sinners for the ſorts of their Sins, chiefeſt of Sinners, and brought them home; ſo ſome that have made the utmoſt adventure of continuance in Sin, that in theſe manifold Glaſſes it might be ſeen, *Where Sin hath abounded, Grace hath abounded much more.*

2. Though the time of this Repentance be ſhort and narrow, and the Duties of Repentance exceeding long and broad; yet where there are found the true ſignatures of Repentance unfeigned, God beholds the Fruit in the Seed and Root, he knows the Perfection of his own Creation, though Infant, or we may conceive ſuch ἐκλεώματα in Repentance, Repentance born out of due time, as *Paul* was in the Apoſtleſhip, ſuddenly accompliſhed, though they had not the regular time of forming, like *a Nation brought forth in a day.* *

" Thus thou Lord anointeſt in a " Moment Herdſmen into Pro- " phets, Shepherds into Kings, " Publicans thou ordaineſt Apo- " ſtles, nor doth their Diſeaſe take leiſure to remove, " whom thou recovereſt, but in that very Moment " thou makeſt them every whit whole, wherein " they have thee for their Phyſician.

* Cyprian *de cœna Domini.*

3. Although there be according to the general Rule, a neceſſity of living to God here in the World; yet God may diſpenſe with the Continuation, or

drawing out of the Action of it in these late Penitents, as we easily allow in the case of Infants, or Men dying within short space after a Repentance begun upon sad Consideration, and not in the Exigency of a Sickness.

In the mean time, it is not at all supposed, that God dispenses with the sincere Preparations and Resolvedness of the Mind to that Action; but that they must be most true, sound and unfeigned, and the very Action it self, according to the time, high, full and most significant; and as extraordinary as the Repentance it self.

4. Although the Condition of a Dying Man do in many regards nearly resemble the state of him, that is already in Eternity, as he is under a necessity of leaving Sin and the World, and set at a distance from Temptation; yet it differs in that great Circumstance, that he is not *in Termino*, he is not fixt upon his unchangeable Point, he hath not undergone that Sentence that immediately passes upon the Soul removed, and so may not either have suffered that more secret one, conceived by God upon long Provocation. The whole time of Life may be a time of Grace, and he that hath not yet been concluded by the incommutability of Eternity may hear the Voice of Christ, and enter into his Rest. * *Cyprian*, who is positive, " That whenever " a Man is launched into another " World, he finds no room for Re- " pentance; he is out of the cli- " mate of Repentance, who is be- " yond the line of Time. All kinds of Penitencies " which are a secondary Satisfaction under the Suf- " ferings

* *Quando ist-[illegible] excessum [illegible], nullus [illegible] pœnitentiæ locus. Libr. ad* Demetrianum.

" ferings of Chriſt are then deſperate and fruitleſs. Yet he allows the greateſt liberty to Repentance in this Life; For he ſays, * " No " Repentance is late, that is ear- " lier than the Grave. He ſays, " Here a Man takes hold of Life, " or loſes it for ever. Yea he grants, " † It is poſſible by Repentance, " though we are juſt a Dying, to " be ſafely landed in a bleſſed Im- " mortality. And ‡ when the Soul " hath left its inward Reſidences, " and is now ſitting upon the dy- " ing Lips, before its laſt farewel " to the Body, and when in haſte " to be gone, yet even then infinite " Clemency diſdains not Repen- " tance, nor accounts that late that " is true, nor deprives that of par- " don, which hath the free and full act of the Soul " in return to him. *Et quæcunque neceſſitas, &c.* " Yea though, as he goes on, this Repentance had " its firſt riſe from Neceſſity, yet neither that, " nor the Immenſeneſs of Guilt, nor Straitneſs " of Time, nor the Lateneſs of the Seaſon, nor " the Foulneſs of former Actions fore prize " from Pardon when the Humiliation is ſincere, " and the Soul exchanges impure Delights for " thoſe of Holineſs, without Counterfeit or Diſ- " ſimulation. It may ſeem in all thoſe Diſcourſes, that he had forgot to enter a Caution againſt Preſumption; but it is to be conſidered while he thus frankly pours out himſelf, he was one while inviting Perſe-

* *In iſto adhuc mundo manenti nulla pœnitentia ſera eſt, &c.*

† *Ad immortalitatem ſub ipſa morte tranſitur.* De cœna Domini.

‡ *In eodem articulo temporis cum jam anima feſtinet ad exitum, &c.*

* *In Libr. ad* Demetrianum. *Credite & vivite & qui nos ad tempus perſequimini in æternum gaudete nobiſcum.*

† *Velit nolit* Novatus *Hæreticus, omni tempore Dei gratia recipit penitentes.*

* Perſecutors of Chriſtianity into the Confeſſions of it, whom he would not have debarred with the ſenſe of ſo great paſt Offences againſt it. Another while deſigning againſt the *Novatian* Hereſie, which took upon it to tie up the freeneſs of Grace, as he ſays, "† In ſpight of the Heretick *Novatus*, the Throne of Grace is "early and late acceſſible to true "Repentance. This therefore is not to be preſſed beyond the deſign of the excellent and holy Writer, but will very well agree with all that I am preſently to add as a Ballance to this favourable Judgment for ſuch a Repentance.

Dailie. For as that moſt prudent Diſcourſe of the right uſe of the Fathers teaches us; we muſt always attend their ſcope, in the purſuit of which they were often tranſported towards the other extreme.

But that a dying Repentance in the nature of the thing is no Incompoſſibility, we have fulleſt Aſſurance in the Example of the Text, wherein we ſee one in a moment conceived, brought forth, and even a grown Man in Repentance, one paſſing through ſome ſhort Inſtants of holy Action, and entring into Paradiſe, like *Aaron*'s Rod budding, bloſſoming, and bringing forth ripe Almonds in a Night, and laid up in the Sanctuary for ever.

That it was moſt probably the firſt Call he had to Repentance, agrees fully with the Intention of my Diſcourſe, which granting ſo much as a Poſſibility, would yet take all advantage againſt the eaſie Con-

fidence

fidence of those, that living daily under the offers of Grace, and yet despising them, commit themselves first to the Intentions, and at last to the faint motions of a late Repentance. To whom that Admonition of *Austin* is most seasonable concerning the Instance we have in hand. * *If we respect his Opportunities for attaining Faith, his Repentance was not late, but early and soon, he took the very first Season; as soon as ever he descried Christ and Religion, he embraced them. He did not wretchedly cheat himself of the Remedies of his miserable Condition by adjourning the Use of them to a late and incertain Futurity, which seldom or never succeeds well.*

* *Ad consequendam fidem non fuit illi extrema hora, sed prima. Nec Religionem ante, nec* Christum *scivit, non remedia status sui in momenta ultima infœlici fraude posuit.*

Serm. 120. *de Temp.*

This Consideration leads me therefore from the most favourable, the light side of this milder Sentence, to the black and dark part of it.

That is to say, There is an Extreme peradventure, whether God will give Repentance at the last or not; for this Grace being acknowledged extraordinary, if it were common, it would cease to be extraordinary.

It is most undoubted in Scripture, God is often *provoked* against Men to *swear*, *they shall never enter into his rest*, when they *have long tempted him, and Erred from his ways.* Heb. 3 8,9. &c.

The Heart is daily hardened by the deceitfulness of Sin, till it grow to that the Apostle calls

κατ-

καρδία ἀμετανόητος, a Heart that is Irrepentable, or that cannot be repented of: Customs in Sin long setled become like *the Ethiopians Skin, and the Leopards Spots*, that cannot be changed. And though it is true, the Spirit of God is not hindered in its Inspirations, but that it bloweth where it listeth; yet the course of it is so attemper'd to the state and motion of the Soul it self, that it most usually takes the opportunity so generally requisite to the setling a Constitution and Temper in us; that is; the freest and most unprejudiced, and larger spaces of a Man's Life: So that whenever it works upon Dying Men, I mean those that have had the free use of the means of Grace of old; It works by such a Prerogative, that a Man may as well expect a Prerogative of Providence to bear him walking upon the Sea, because it did once so to *Peter*, as this.

Rom. 4. 2.

Jerem. 13. 23.

Most even of the fairest Appearances of this kind of Repentance miscarry, having no true Virtue in them; and though in regard of their vehemency they are called early Seekings of God, yet (which is horrible to be spoken) they are as it were prepared for the Triumphs of the Justice and Indignation of God over those, who would have none of his Counsel in former times, but despised all his reproof.

Prov. 1. 28.

Lastly, Whoever seeing and knowing casts himself with design upon Repentance at Death, is like to fall headlong by tempting God, and expecting he should stand ready for him with that Grace at last, he hath so long resisted and refused.

And

And now when this Judgment of Divines with this Ballance upon it is compared with the former, the reſult will be only this, the kindeſt Divinity in the point, and that ſeems to do the moſt favor, is very dreadful, and leaves ſuch Men in a Condition next to deſperate, which is but an Aggravation of the danger, when what Men would chooſe to appeal to, ſo far condemns them.

It is then agreed on all hands, that for any Man to live ſo as if he did contrive and forecaſt a Dying Repentance (altho it be yielded him, it is no impoſſibility) as the ſafe expedient, firſt of an Irreligious Life, free from the troubleſome Thoughts of a preſent Amendment, and then of a ſecure Paſſage into Eternity; It is firſt an exceeding Irreligion and Immorality in it ſelf; and then to run ſo deſperate a Riſque and Adventure for an Immortal Soul; that he is a pardonable Mad-man, in compariſon of ſuch an one, that drinks a deadly Poyſon, becauſe he hath heard there is a certain Antidote in the World, that will expel it, though he cannot tell whether he can have it at all, much leſs whether time enough for his neceſſity; and laſtly, whether the Endeavors he uſes for it will not be deluded with the Counterfeits of it, it being ſuppoſed they are thouſands for one of the true kind; and he thereby periſh, pleaſing himſelf with the hopes he hath it, when he hath indeed but a likeneſs of it.

2. *Head.* I come now to the ſecond Propoſal, which is to make inquiry, ſeeing the Caſe is thus, as it every way appears to be, How the name or notion of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, as ſuch an univerſal Refuge, came up in the World; for it is a new Repentance, (*much like thoſe new-come-*

come-up Gods Moſes ſpeaks of, *Deut.* 32. 17.) that Chriſtianity and the Goſpel know not. The Scriptures that treat moſt profeſſedly of Repentance, always inſiſt upon it as a reformed courſe of Life, to be undertaken even now, while the Propoſals of Grace and Reconciliation are made to us; and only by very ſilent Intimations, the track of which is hardly diſcerned, leave it poſſible, that God ſhould by miracle ſave ſome very few out of the Fire, and pull them as Brands out of the Burning, by giving them Repentance at the laſt. Whereas this is now become the only Repentance in uſe, and hath devoured the other; as if to preſs Men upon it were to torment them before their time, and to leſſen the Validity of this were to take away the Mercy of God, and deny the Grace that is ſo free and univerſal. Let us ſearch therefore how this ſort of Repentance hath come into ſuch Repute. And if we obſerve, we ſhall find it firſt riſing from the intimate Senſe the Conſcience hath of the neceſſity of Repentance; For were it not ſo clear and evident a Duty, *a Death-Bed Repentance* had never been heard of; moſt would chooſe to go out of the World as they have lived in it, not ſuffering any degree of the trouble of Conſcience, or vexing themſelves with Reflections upon an unholy and ill-ſpent Life. As Men have choſe to live freely and uninterruptedly in forgetfulneſs of God, and an Eternal Condition *days without number*, Jer. 2. 32. ſo would they chooſe to die, were there not a Law within, that however it hath lain covered with the Duſt of Senſuality, yet is now reſtored to its Authority, and urges the Soul with the Terror of Puniſhment for ſo long Diſobedience.

And

And ſecondly, this neceſſity of Repentance, though ſecretly underſtood, yet was not ſufficiently conſidered in the time of Health, for had it been equally regarded, it had not been now to begin. He that had rightly meaſured it, would not for a thouſand Worlds ſo have adjourned it.

Theſe two things then meeting ſo oft together, *viz.* The neceſſity of Repentance; and the neglect of it all along our Life: the neceſſity it ſhould be performed ſome time, ere Men go out of the World; and the neglect of it in the freer Opportunities of Life; Theſe, I ſay, bring forth haſty motions of it at laſt: For it loſing nothing of its neceſſity by its delay, it muſt be done, as well as it may be at that time; even as the laſt Moments, wherein Buſineſſes of great Conſequence are to be diſpatched, preſs for Expedition the more earneſtly, becauſe they muſt be done then or never, though it often falls out, the time is ſo far paſt, they ſuffer not only much diſadvantage, but even defeat by the delay.

The Notion of a *Death-Bed Repentance* then we may perceive riſing from the great Indiſpoſition to Repent, while the Pleaſures of Sin are in their Seaſon, and flouriſh, and Men in Health and Strength to enjoy them; and from the neceſſities of Repentance falling upon them at the laſt, and wringing from them ſometimes very high Acknowledgments of God and an Eternal Condition, paſſionate Expreſſions of the folly, evil and vanity of former Life, deſires of Mercy, Profeſſions of ſtrong Reſolvedneſs to ſerve God, and if they had many Lives to give God, they would give them all. All which being ſo unuſual to hear formerly out of ſuch Mouths, and coming from Dying Men, for whoſe Sayings we have a natural

tural regard, Charity towards them, and willingneſs to hope well of them, gives theſe Semblances, the Reputation of Repentance. To which may be added, That thoſe who are Guides and Seers in Religion too often, *errante Clave*, by too Liberal an Abſolution open the Kingdom of Heaven to ſuch, and taking the Inſtruments of a fooliſh Shepherd to themſelves, heal the hurt of their Souls ſlightly; ſo that their Repentance is ſainted here, and though it miſcarry in the other World, yet the miſcarriage is hid alſo in that other World.

From all this hath ariſen a down-right Opinion of this kind of Repentance, as the only σοφὸν φάρμακον the Prudent Expedient, that compounds two ſo different Intereſts, firſt that of a worldly Converſation, to which it gives no hinderance; then that of Eternal Life in appearance, becauſe it aſſumes the Promiſes of Mercy to it ſelf, eſpecially thoſe gracious Aſſurances in *Ezek.* 18. *Chap.* 33. it reckons as made on purpoſe for it. All which argues a very vile Senſe both of the Juſtice and Mercy of God; of his Juſtice as if it had no authority, of his Mercy as if it had no ſenſe of Honour.

And laſtly it is grown into a general Expectation, that however ill and careleſly of God Men have lived here, yet they ſhould go out of the World with good words of him and Religious Profeſſions, as an Inbalm to their Memory and a Dirge to their Souls into the Happineſs of an Everlaſting Condition.

Thus they call Repentance and Heaven *after their own name. This their way is their folly; yet their Poſterity, men of like Inclinations, approve their ſayings*; becauſe ſuch Men (*as*

Pſal. 49. 11. 13, 14, &c.

they

they ſpeak) go away like Lambs, *but as the Scripture ſays, like ſenſleſs Sheep are laid in the Grave, and Death feeding upon them*, the Error is not diſcovered *till the morning: when the upright have dominion over them*; that is, infinitely excel them, and their counterfeit Repentance, *which cannot ſtand in judgment, nor they in the congregation* of ſincere Penitents, *Pſal.* 1. *verſ.* 5.

Now this account I have given of a *Death-Bed Repentance* obtaining among us, is too comprehenſive; yet I muſt acknowledge, that there are many whoſe Judgments are more enlightned, and the Sentiments of their Conſciences quicker than to be ſatisfied at ſo eaſie a rate, who yet fall into the common unhappineſs of not having repented, till they come to die: I will therefore enquire further, why many who are able to feel before-hand the neceſſities of a ſpeedy Repentance, and alſo to draw their Death ſo near them, as to die daily in the ſenſe of Death; and thereby further perceive thoſe Neceſſities, do not yet Repent daily, but betray themſelves to an *Evening or Twilight Repentance.*

The Reſolution of this lies not only in the immoderate love of Sin and its Pleaſures, and the too low apprehenſion of God and Eternal Things, (though theſe are always preſent in the caſe) but chiefly it lies in the great Confidence ſuch Men have in the preſent time, not ſenſible of the continual waſte of it; Under the favour of which they *put away the evil day far from them, and ſtretch themſelves* upon this moment, *Amos* 6.3. *&c.* that they may take their full Eaſe and Satisfaction: In the mean while ſtifling the Thoughts of Dying and Judgment. Were it not for this, no other Reaſon would encourage them to de-

lay their Repentance; for when this Fails, all others generally fail alſo, and therefore none are ſo paſſionately moved, as ſuch, when they come to die.

This Cloud that is but as big as a Man's hand (*our days are as an hands breadth*, Pſal 39. 6.) yet looks like the whole Heaven; It ſtands as a Firmament over their heads, It looks like an Eternity to Men. In this time Repentance finds as little place with them, as it is like to do with God in the Evening of Life.

In this occaſion the wild Aſſes of the Wilderneſs ſnuff up the wind at their pleaſure, and none can turn them, Jer. 2. 24. *The luſt of the Fleſh, the luſt of the Eye, and the pride of Life* ſwallow all and can ſpare nothing; Yet in the midſt of all this the Soul promiſes it ſelf, it will ere long take a Seaſon of recollecting it ſelf, and that it will do it time enough, ſo timely as to leave ſpace ſufficient for a large Exerciſe of Repentance; for although it is but upon the edges and skirts of Time, yet it ſeems to it ſelf to be upon the Center, and in its Imagination commands the future, as if it were in its own hand; ſo that through the endleſs returns of Pleaſure and Buſineſs, through Indiſpoſedneſs to holy and ſerious Action, through Intentions and Purpoſes of being better hereafter, it ſlips down, e're ever it is aware, into the loweſt of Life, and hath the buſineſs of Repentance lying whole and undiminiſhed upon its hand: *Yet a little ſleep, a little ſlumber, a little folding of the hands to ſleep, deceives men, till their laſt end comes as an armed man*, Prov. 24. 12. The hopes that *to morrow will be as to day, and much more abundant*, Iſa. 56. 12. ſo as to leave enough for ſadder Thoughts, befools Men, till the very Courſe of Time rows them before they think of it upon Eternity.

Of

Of great moment therefore it is *to number our days rightly, that we may know how frail we are*, Pſal. 39. 4. *And to apply our Hearts to Wiſdom*, Pſal. 90. 12. For this time of Life though it be but little, yet *it boaſts great things*, Jam. 3. 5. This Vapor ſtretches out it ſelf as far as it can: *It rejoices in its own boaſtings which are evil*, Jam. 4. 16. In the mean while the Moments of it are winged, and fly from us; they glide away, and we cannot, except we bring them to ſtrict Account, take hold of them to graft any thing upon them: How does to day like *an Egale, or Poaſt, or ſwift Ship, or Arrow* get from us, *leaving no path?* Wiſd. 5. 9, &c. And if we offer to take the Account, how many things ſnatch it from us, as an impertinent Diſturber from him that is catching ſlippery numbers? *Here is Wiſdom, let him that hath it count the number of Life, for it is the number of a Man*, Rev. 13. 18. A ſhort number. *It is all but Dying Man*, Eccl. 6. 10. And yet it requires great Ingenuity, The Ingenuity of a Man, *that is indeed a Man*, to find it: But he that miſſes it, is found *at the end of his days a Fool*, and finds that *dreadful reward of a Fool*, Jer. 17. 11. That *the great God, that formed all things, gives to the Fool* as well as to the *Tranſgreſſor*, Prov. 26. 10. *But thoſe that are wiſe ſhine as the Sun in the Firmament*, Dan. 12. 3.

Thus far I have inſiſted upon the Accounts, how this *Baptiſm of Repentance for the Dead*, 1 Cor. 15. 29. came in upon Chriſtianity, that is, How it comes to paſs that Men will not be *baptiſed with this Baptiſm* till they are given over for dead Men, like thoſe *Clinici* of the firſt Times, that delay'd their Baptiſm to their laſt Bed, of whom ſome Expound

that place, 1 *Cor.* 15. 29. *Vid.* Eſtium *in locum.*

But the Miſtake in this Caſe (though that paſſed not without ſome note of Diſgrace) is in a point of much higher Conſequence, and ſo far more dangerous, and hath alſo leſs of reaſonable Pretence; for while they thought, Baptiſm waſhed away all paſt Sins, and was but once to be done; it ſeemed a neceſſary Providence to take the full Benefit of it at the laſt, upon which account *Tertullian* even Expoſtulates, *Quorſum feſtinat innocens ætas ad remiſſionem peccatorum?* while he Diſcourſes of Infant-Baptiſm.

Whereas the *Water of* Repentance *is never forbidden*, Acts 10. 47. but may be both evenly drawn through the whole courſe of Life, and often renewed to ſupply the Defects of it ſelf; which is one Signification of that μέλανοια ἀμέλαμέλητος, 2 *Cor.* 7. 10. that Repentance, which is always promoted, but never retracted. Nor do I indeed doubt, but the Water of Baptiſm, wherever it hath effect, as a Spring, that from the firſt Moment wherein it is truly received, runs down with a free Current upon the whole Courſe of Life, and is therefore univerſally * to be applyed. And whenever Converting Grace works, it leads back the Soul, though through many Years paſt, to the Virtue of that Sacramental Fountain.

* *Operatur in Baptiſmo pœnitentia, tanquam in fundamento.* Auguſt. *Expoſ. Ep. ad* Roman.

But to return: Although theſe Accounts I have now given of a *Death-bed Repentance*, obtaining among us, infold the whole Multitude of dying Penitents,

nitents, yet according to the former ſtate given I do not deny, but that ſome very rare Example there may be, giving a better Senſe to this ſort of Repentance; Examples of the Grace of God, acting in a way of Prerogative, as hath been ſaid, and working effectually the truth of Repentance in ſome; upon whom he lays the hand of his Salvation and Reſcue, while they ſtand upon the very laſt minutes of the Seaſon of Grace, and are juſt dropping down into Hell; and guides them to take their Lateſt ſteps in the ways of Life, wherein they had hitherto been ſtrangers; upon whom a great Miracle is wrought, that they ſhould in their almoſt perfected motion to endleſs Ruin be ſtopt, and when they had juſt finiſhed their Courſe thither, they ſhould yet be tranſplanted into the way Everlatting.

But I proceed to the Third Head. To examine the moſt hopeful appearances of this kind of Repentance, and to ſhew there are plain Cauſes of them, much below the nature of true Repentance.

And firſt in the general: It is no wonderful thing to find Men in a Paroxyſm, in a high Paſſion of ſeeking after God, when they are a Dying. It is indeed more ſtrange to find any ſo ſotted, ſo ſear'd, *That their ſpirits ſeem only to go downward: They are Beaſts while they live, and as ſuch they go down to the dead*, Eccleſ. 3. 18, *&c. There are no bands in their Death*, Pſal. 73. 4. *They go down in a Moment*, Job 21. 13. There is not a Moment between the firſt and ſecond Death of the Soul, not a Moment of Life between, not ſo much as of the Life of natural Conſcience. *They are twice dead*, Jude 12. dead in the common Corruption of Nature wherein they are born. Dead in the loſs of Natural Principles:

pulled up by the roots, there's nothing to quicken or move in them. This is amazing Stupor: *They die like a ſtone*, Exod. 15. 5. 1 Sam. 25. 37. they plunge down with the whole weight and force of Impenitency.

This way of Dying hath certainly greater Puniſhment, and heavier Condemnation; and though it ſeem more chooſeable than a fruitleſs Repentance, yet doubtleſs Eternity makes a difference, though not ſuch an one, as ſhould give any one Confidence to imbarque into it in a *Coffin-Repentance*.

But whether it be rather to be choſen or not, this is paſt queſtion; It is unavoidable to ſome; whether they will or no they are ſurprized with Thoughts, what will become of them for ever, and few Men but have thoughts this way at ſuch a time above ordinary.

But I intend to ſpeak of the faireſt and beſt ſpread Repentance that is found upon a Death-bed. That which gives the livelieſt Hopes of it ſelf, that it is true and ſincere; not ſuch an one that to a ſerious Obſerver betrays it ſelf; not either that forced compoſure, to the Expectation of the World, which looks for a ſolemn Profeſſion of God from every one that dies; nor an ignorant and formal Repentance; but a Repentance that hath much of Vigor, and inward Affection, and is driven on by great knowledge and light; that is accompanied with much Sorrow, and very conſiderate Apprehenſions of Eternal Things: And if ſuch an one be ſo queſtionable, what can become of others?

There is no reaſon any Repentance ſhould be the better eſteemed becauſe Men are Dying, but much the leſs. Now while Men are living a thouſand of theſe ſeeming Changes for the better, are evidently confu-

confuted without more ado, by after returns to Wickedneſs; and they that have to do with ſuch ſhews of Reformation, have no regard of them, nor of the Perſons for them. Now God, who is the exact Searcher of Hearts, can much leſs be impoſed upon by the faireſt appearances; nor can Men wiſe according to the Rules of Scripture be eaſily well perſwaded of them, and when they are beſt perſwaded, there muſt needs bea very trembling Conſideration of ſo great a hazard.

Apud illum Cordis Interpretem Ars non admittitur ad ſalutem. Auguſt. *Serm.* 120.

But to come more particularly to what I have propoſed, *viz.* To ſhew that Repentance is a Height, to which theſe general Motives of this late Repentance can never mount the Soul. In which I will begin with the Deſcriptions of true Repentance, in that wherein it is moſt difficult (not to ſay impoſſible) to riſe to it upon a Dying Bed.

Repentance in all the parts of it, is the fulleſt, cleareſt act of the Soul and Judgment, wherein it is moſt perfectly it ſelf. Remove a Man never ſo far from all kind of Fears, from the Appearances of Death, if he were to live Ages, he would be of the ſame Senſe. He that truly Repents, doth not ſnatch up Repentance, as an Expedient for a preſent Extremity, but chooſes it as an entrance into the beſt ſtate of Life, and lives always, and reſts himſelf in this choice. For however this may be introduced by very troubleſom and tumultuous Motions, yet it is it ſelf the eaſie ſitting down of the Soul with abun-

Τῆς ἀμεταμελήτου ζωῆς ἡ πρώτη παρασκευή. Hieroc. *Carm. Pyth Pura voluptatum mutatio.* Cypr.

abundant Pleaſure and Satisfaction in the abhorrence of Sin, and love of Holineſs, in the diſlike of Vanity and Senſuality, in the Approbation of heavenly Purity of Heart and Life. It is not a Trance wherein Sin lies dead, and a Man is in a Rapture of Goodneſs for a time, but a moſt ſetled State. *Godly ſorrow, that worketh Repentance, worketh Carefulneſs, Fear, Revenge, Deſire,* 2 Cor. 7. 11. *and by* theſe accompliſheth *a Repentance to Salvation,* that hath no after-pain or trouble, no μεταμέλεια. Verſ. 10. Theſe Affections are Preparations. Repentance enters as a Soul into theſe, which is a ſtill, ſolid, clear Act of Reaſon renewed, and a Mind which gives an uniform Vote at all times. A Change that is never changed back again, no more than things can put off themſelves, or evil it ſelf become good. It is therefore upon fulleſt Deliberation to chooſe with *Joſhuah, I and my houſe,* thoſe whom *I* can govern, *will ſerve the Lord,* Joſh. 24. 15. It is *Engaging the Heart to approach to God, the joining our ſelves to him by an everlaſting Covenant, never to be forgotten,* Jer. 30. 21. and 50. 5. *The cleaving to him with full purpoſe of Heart,* Acts 11. 23. When all forerunning Affections are laid and quiet, or worn out, this Judgment ſtill remains, and raiſeth other Affections like it ſelf, that ever remain with it; into which the Spirits of the former are extracted, and wherein they exerciſe all the true power they had. But now on a Death-bed there is often a great Commotion raiſed, a loud bluſtre of Paſſion never arriving at this point, at this Settlement: But if a Man ſhould live after, it would go off, as Clouds and Storms, that when they have ſpent themſelves, vaniſh and lie down: And when a Man dies, it is to

be

be fear'd, that as they were raiſed by approach to the unappeaſable Tempeſts of Darkneſs, ſo they are hurried with their Violence.

2. It is carefully to be obſerved, that there is in true Repentance a due Proportion betwixt the contrite Indignation of the Soul againſt paſt Sin, and the love and zeal it hath for Holineſs: whereas in *Death-bed Repentances*, it is ofteneſt found, that there is either a terrifying Preſence only of former Sins, appearing to the affrighted Conſcience, without a more hopeful Indication of the Soul truly compoſed to Righteouſneſs: or elſe ſome high flying Reſolutions of better Life afterward, offered, as a kind of Bribe to the Patience and Mercy of God, in hopes of preſent Deliverance, or at beſt, as a Ranſom from Hell and Eternal Damnation; but without a deep ſenſe of the guilt and evil of paſt Sins, or the juſt apprehenſion of that continually running iſſue of Corruption, that is ſtill defiling anew: Either of theſe is a main Error, and pernicious; For if on the one ſide the Heart in a Rage be forced to caſt out ſome Sins for the turbulency of them, if it be not immediately filled with better Gueſts, *Seven other Spirits are ready to enter, and make the laſt ſtate of that Man worſe than the firſt*, Mat. 12. 43. For Repentance is no void ſpace, no ſilent, or unactive ſtate, but when it hath diſlodged Luſts, furniſhes and fills the Soul with the beſt things, and carries the vigor of a Man's Action to the beſt effect; *When by repentance a Man ceaſes to do evil, he learns to do Well*, Iſai. 1. 16, 17. *And brings forth fruits meet for repentance, and amendment of life*, Mat. 3. 8.

On the other ſide, he that ſeems to make a haſty motion to Holineſs without due ſenſe of Sin, firſt thinks

thinks to overrule the method God hath ſet, who requires Humiliation, godly Sorrow, Anger, Revenge, Fear, as preparing to Repentance: And further, he conceits a freedom to himſelf, when he is fetter'd and bound; without a power given him from God, he offers to caſt out *Devils with eaſe, that cannot be caſt out, but by faſting and prayer*, Mark 9. 29. (that is) ſevere courſes of Self-abaſement, and loweſt dependences together with earneſteſt Application to the Grace of God. Theſe unclean Spirits therefore, that diſſemble a retreat, return immediately, and make a Prey of the deluded Soul, *Acts* 19.14, *&c.*

3. Although Heaven and Hell, Happineſs and Miſery, take up the thoughts of a true Penitent, yet not ſeparated from God and Chriſt, but as it were compounded into the Senſe of God angry, and the deſire of Attonement with him in *Jeſus Chriſt*. Happineſs and Miſery conſidered apart are not the object of the gracious Soul: But God and Chriſt conſidered apart are an infinitely ſufficient Reaſon of Repentance. The clear love of God towards the Soul, as a Father in Chriſt without Reflections upon Happineſs, is, though not the ſingle, yet the paramount Conſideration in Repentance unfeigned. But Men a Dying are generally ſo over-poſſeſſed with the Terrors of an Eternal Suffering, and meer deſires of Freedom from pain; and of well-being, and ſo in haſte, that they generally miſs theſe higher Conſiderations, which being further off, not only from corrupt Nature, but even from natural Conſcience, are not commonly eſpied, but therefore argue greater Sincerity, and truth of Heart.

4. The trueſt Repentance lies in the boſom of Faith, the apprehenſions of the Love and Goodneſs of

of God in Christ melt the Soul, and give it most perfect Separation from Sin, the most effectual Purification of the Heart; all which expres the height of Repentance. Upon the soft Fire of the pardoning Goodnes of God, the Soul most kindly distils into repentant Tears. Here flows that Spirit of Grace, and ingenuous Goodnes, which bringeth forth the clearest and holiest Affection towards God.

But at the time we are now speaking of; It is very seldom, that either Horror or Presumption do not swallow all: Presumption, where there is little Sense or Judgment of the Case; Horror, where the Judgment is clearer and the Sense quicker; for evey thing disposes now rather to Fear, *and to the Spirit of Bondage*, Rom. 8: 15. and a Man naturally does all he does under a servile dread of God, and his Eternal Justice. And though there may be much mention of Christ, and desire of Mercy through him; yet it is but as a Malefactor convicted, beseeches the Mercy of the Judge, no otherwise than as of a Judge: So such call out for the Mercy of God to pardon them, but still as a Judge, not with the *Spirit of the Son sent into the Heart, the Spirit of Adoption crying Abba, Father.* Nor *with that love that casteth out unworthy Fear*, Gal. 4. 6. And indeed how can it be otherwise, there having been *no acquaintance with God in the way.* Job 22.21. but a long Enmity; and the time now too strait for a free and full Consideration of the riches of Grace, such as may still an awakened Conscience: Fear presses in every way, and shuts out Faith. What can now redeem the Soul from this hellish Terror, but a light from Heaven immediately darting into it, a Grace above that Grace, that ordinarily saves Men? For a well

well ſetled Truſt and Confidence in Mercy according to the general Rule, is not, but after ſome ſad debates, and experimental Conſultations, that have paſſed between the ſenſe of Sin, and the affiancing Acts of the Soul upon Chriſt. This Repentance then is in great danger of miſſing the Spirit of the Goſpel, and falling into the Rank of thoſe Repentances of *Cain*, *Eſau*, *Judas*.

This I have endeavoured to ſhew, that though we ſuppoſe a Dying Man to ſpread his Soul and Thoughts every way, and to all the parts of Repentance; yet it is extremely to be ſuſpected, there will want the true and right quality of them; in regard of the very diſadvantageous Circumſtances, wherein ſuch an one is found; and the great unfitneſs of the Soul at that time, to begin to do any thing worthy, to which it hath not been before inured; or if it did begin, it would be much more unlikely *to bring forth fruit* (as our Saviour ſpeaks) *to perfection*, Luke 8. 14.

I add nothing of the Exerciſes of a full and well grown Repentance, whereby it is daily eſpying the riſings of Sin, and ſuppreſſing them, and filling up the Defects of Holineſs and Obedience; becauſe they are not to be thought poſſible in the point I am now ſpeaking of, and I have already given a Reſolution in that Caſe.

I ſhall now ſet my ſelf to find out the low Cauſes, that are alway to be ſuſpected to have the great Influence upon ſuch a *Latter-end Penitency*.

In general therefore, we muſt take notice, that there are ſeveral vapors of miſapprehenſion, riſing upon the Soul, when we are a Dying, that do ſo diſguiſe it to it ſelf, and diſfigure the true face of it, that from thence ariſe dangerous Miſtakes concerning a Mans Condition towards God. We

We see into how many shapes upon ordinary Occurrences we change, and how easily we exchange them for quite different, without any good Cause; what continual Ebbs and Flows there are of the Humours, and how do these cast the Ballance of the Superiour Soul? One Man is every hour some several sorts of Men.

How much more do great Accidents, and removes out of one Condition into another, alter us? Which yet are but the sudden and just now state of our Minds upon such Alterations, which not continuing we return to our former Figure, *Unstable and weak as water*, Gen. 49. 3. we take the form of every Vessel we are put into. Who knows then whether his Dying Repentance be any more than the Mould, not of his Mind, but of his Dying Condition approaching him big, with so great a Change? We know many things befal us in our Lives, which put a greater sense of Religion upon us, than we find at other times; and yet how variable are we? *our goodness is as the Morning Dew, and as the early Dew it goeth away*, Hose. 6. 4. How often are we from the occasions of Mercies, Afflictions, Fears, Hopes, good Discourses, carried into high Apprehensions of God? And we lose them again we know not how: Now out of doubt a Dying Condition of any thing we meet with in the World is most apt to move us upon God, and a Sense of him. But can we think, Those fleeting Shoots of the Soul that have no certainty, are accepted for Repentance?

How strangely doth Melancholly and Oppressions of that transform Men? which when it falls upon the Motions of Conscience, gives us strong Imaginations of Eternal Things; which yet being nothing but

but the caſt of that Melancholly upon the Thoughts; when that is removed, they are quite of another hue.

It is evident the Mind ſees much through the Body, and the Repreſentations are coloured by its Temper. As the Eye ſees through yellow or green Glaſs, differently from the things themſelves: So the Serenity or Cloudineſs of the Humours makes a different Reflection of things upon the Mind, and the livelineſs or heavineſs of the Spirits incline us to very varying Apprehenſions.

Now what time is more like to be ſo incumber'd with theſe Clouds and Vapours than a Dying Hour? When every thing is ready to contribute them, and nothing to ſcatter them? If then Natural Conſcience, and implanted Senſe of God together with the Notions given us from Scripture paſs through theſe, they become very impreſſive, and affecting for the time; and yet he much miſtakes Repentance, who thinks it no more, than a fit of Religious Melancholly.

But let us enquire after ſome more ſetled, and conſtant Cauſes of theſe Penitential Motions near Death, and we ſhall find many very likely to be ſo, that are not yet worthy of true Repentance, and therefore what ſprings from them, is not accepted before God.

1. When Men find all their Being in the World at an end, and feel themſelves falling, they know not whither; It is no ſtrange thing they ſhould catch at God, and that they may take hold of him, at Holineſs alſo; Seeing ingraffed Principles together with general Diſcourſe teach every one, how dear Holineſs is to God.

If God and Goodneſs were no more than Imaginary things: It would be no wonder, if they who are toſſed

toſſed off the World, and thrown over-board from it, ſhould ſnatch at them; if there were no more in the Caſe than this, that every one hath heard ſo much ſpeech, and talk of them among Men. For to him that hath nothing in reality, even a Shadow, a Phancy are valuable. Men that are dropping through the Air, or ſinking under Water, without Conſultation offer at every thing they meet with.

In great Extremities ſhort of Death, they that are bereft of all worldly Aſſiſtance, fly to the Divine Succours, though as *Jonah's* Marriners they pray to an Idol inſtead of the true God, and their Devotion is no better than Superſtition, which is but a Phancy in Religion. What ſtrange thing then is it, for nature to cry out for God, and Chriſt, for Pardon of Sin, to be delivered from Hell, and to have Heaven for an everlaſting Reſt, when all things elſe evidently fail as they do in Death; and when not only Phancy, and general Opinion, but moſt ſubſtantial Reaſon inlightned by the Scripture provoke up a Man to it, even for Self preſervation?

Yet this differs but little *from howling upon our Beds for Corn, and Wine, and Oyl*, Hoſ. 7. 14. for though the things differ much in their Nature, yet the Eſteem Men have of them, and the deſire they have after them is much upon the ſame ground; for theſe Spiritual things appear to that natural Senſe of Self-preſervation, as neceſſary in Death, as the other do in Life and Health.

But if the approaches of Death happen to be again drawn off, the value of Spiritual things removes with them, and the things of this World, with all the ſenſual and ſinful Delights of it, return to their former price: which argues the ineffectualneſs of this

this cauſe of Repentance, and the Unacceptableneſs of the Repentance it ſelf to God, that flows from it; God diſclaims Men, that have never come to him before their Extremity, and come then only becauſe of it. *In the time of their trouble they will ſay, Ariſe, and ſave us: But where are thy Gods that thou madeſt? Let them ariſe if they can ſave thee*, Jer. 2. 27, 28. Thus to ſuch Dying Men crying out to him, God ſays, Let your former Luſts and Pleaſures now be your Happineſs. *Fools and ſcorners*, that would not be warned, *call upon God in their calamity, and ſeek him early, when the whirlwind of their deſtructions hurries them, but cannot make him hear, cannot find him*, Prov. 1. 14.

2. Suppoſe the deſires after God, and Eternal Happineſs, with all the Retinue of thoſe Deſires riſe not, ſo much, from the Neceſſities of remove from this Life, and ſenſible Supports, but immediately from the ſight of Eternal things themſelves: yet will not this conclude the Repentance ſincere. For we may eaſily pitch upon ſeveral ſo plain reaſons of theſe quick Apprehenſions of another World, that it is much more ſtrange, if any Man be not ſtruck with them; and they that are, are not in greater Extaſies of theſe Conſiderations, than that moſt die in ſome fair inclinable Temper towards them, and others are extraordinarily ſurprized with them, yet without true Repentance.

For Firſt, If it were no more, but the leiſure, and unintereſtedneſs of the Mind in all worldly things, that Death brings: It is no wonder that the Action of it ſhould immediately, and neceſſarily flow upon God; for it being always in action, and motion from its very Nature, and God having made it for himſelf;

and

and the manner of its living here in the World being a ſlavery willingly undertaken for the Service of the Body, and the Enjoyment of this preſent Life, in its being fallen from God: It is nothing ſtrange, that that Drudgery being now at an end, and the chains wherein it was held, juſt a breaking, it ſhould fall upon God, and Spiritual Objects, whither the ſtream of it was prepared to run, and which are moſt truly its own buſineſs. For the diſtance being ſo wide, and irreconcilable between Man, and this Earth in Death; the very having nothing elſe to do muſt carry him upon the Future State; ſeeing his Soul is ſuch a Being as cannot naturally lie ſtill, and that State is all, that it hath to work upon, and further than that, it is ſo nearly allied to it.

Secondly, The very looſening and uncementing the Soul from the Body, wherein it dwelt, and wherein the Motions of it were reſtrained, hath been thought very probably to give Men leſſer degrees of thoſe Advantages near their Death, which naked and free Spirits not incloſed and pent up in Bodies have, whereby they have been able to make Conjectures of future things, and to ſpeak prophetically. The leſs the Soul is bound to work by the Body, the higher are its Operations. All extraordinary Motions of the Soul are a kind of Raviſhment from Senſe. Thoſe great Prophetick Bleſſings of *Jacob and Moſes* were near their Dying. It is therefore very eaſie

Multi enim quum remiſſi & liberi ſunt futura proſpiciunt, ex quo intelligitur quales futuri ſint quum ſe plane corporis vinculis relaxaverint. Cic. *de Senect.*

Gen. 49.
Deut. 32, c. 33.

to be thought, that when the Soul and Body are ready to cleave asunder, and the Spirit to be separated from Flesh, that it should make an higher flight towards Eternal Things.

The nearer every thing is to its own Residence, the more vehement is its motion said to be thither. So there may very well be quick sallies of the Soul towards Eternity, before it enters into it, when it is so near that everlasting Receptacle of it self.

Thirdly, We may observe in the Experience of all times, every appearance of the other World hath strange effects of Fear, and affrightment upon Mens Minds: When any one is entring then into that whole World, it may well put him upon purifying himself, more than they that fall upon *Leviathan*, Job 41. 25. When Men are just upon that Region of Spirits, what appalements of Mind and strong working of Thoughts must there needs be? Much more if the Soul have any sense of its approach to the infinite Holiness of God, at whose rebuke the Pillars of Heaven tremble; whose presence astonishes the purer Spirits of Angels, and beats down the Souls of good Men to the Dust, as of *Moses*, *Job*, *Isaiah*, *&c.* in his interviews with them. How much more of those that have never thought of God, and now must come near his Seat?

Heb. 12. 21. Isai. 6. 5. Job 42. 6. Dan. 10. 8.

Nothing so composes the Soul to this amazing change of Condition and Converse, as long continued Treaties with God through Christ: when though Men change their place, they do not change their company: Others, when this great *light strikes them*,

Job 24. 17. Job 38. 15.

them, are in the very terrors of the ſhadow of death, and ſhaken out of their place, out of all the Security, and quiet Senſuality they lived in.

Let us now take the eſtimate or avail of theſe things to true Repentance, and we ſhall find, when the Soul lies thus uncovered to the things of Eternity, it hath natural Reaſons for all, it may ſeem to do like return to God, and ſo that all argue nothing of the true Grace of God; but if a Man were again in his former State he would be the very ſame he was: For firſt, as one thing ſtrikes upon another with a natural Effect, Light upon the Eye, Sound upon the Ear, ſo Eternal Things upon the Immortal Spirit, when there is nothing between to intercept the ſtroke. Further, 1 John 2. 16. when *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life* are as a Scene removed, and a Play at an end; and inſtead of them another World drawing near, juſt as Men defeated in all their attempts for Riches, and Honours, and beaten off from them to a private Life, call all theſe things Cheats; not out of true Reaſon, but becauſe they cannot reach them: on the other ſide they praiſe Retirement and a Cloyſter, not that they like it, but becauſe they muſt live ſo, which begets ſome kind of Contentedneſs ſo to live. Thus and no otherwiſe do many Dying Men call all this World Vanity, and profeſs an high Eſteem for all things pertaining to that to come.

Cauſe 3. There is yet a more preſſing Account of the moſt notable motions that were ever found in any of their Repentances, *viz.* The awakenings of Conſcience uſual at this time, becauſe of the Senſe of a Judgment: while common Experience tells

Men, *It is appointed to all Men once to die*, Heb. 9. 27. and ſinking Nature gives notice, This is the time: Conſcience lifts up to the next thing. *After that the Judgment.*

Now no Man ſees Judgment, a Judgment Omniſcient, Omnipreſent, Eternal, without great ſhakes of Soul, eſpecially that hath done nothing ſeriouſly *to agree with the adverſary in the way*, Luk. 12. 18. Conſcience then riſing up with the Awe of a Tribunal upon it, ſtirs up all the Powers to fly from the Wrath that is to come, by deſires of Pardon, and Reſolutions of Amendment. The very hearing of Judgment made ſuch a one as *Fœlix tremble*. When Judgment ſeems to us, at the other end of Heaven, all is quiet; but when Death brings us to the very ſeat of it, how loud may be the cries for Mercy? The bewailing the former evils of Life? Now Men pour out their Complaints for the want of God, the miſimprovement of former time: Now they make large offers of a ſtrict and ſevere Mortification, and Devotion to Religion. Now they would give *the thouſand Rams, the ten thouſand Rivers of Oyl, their firſt born for their Traſgreſſion, the fruit of their Body for the ſin of their Soul*, Mic. 6. 6, 7. And yet all but the Eye opened to ſee the flaming Sword of Juſtice, that makes even a *Balaam* wiſh to die the death of the Righteous, and to have a latter End, Sober, Juſt, Religious.

Acts 24. 25.

Num. 22. 32. *cap.* 23. 10.

The very Suſpition of a Judgment inclines Men thus far univerſally almoſt, that hardly any chooſe to die in a Rant, in a Madneſs; but had rather by virtue,

virtue, and Religion be consigned over to another World; and have their Eyes closed by Mercy, and Grace in Christ: They would see the Salvation of God, and so depart in Peace.

Object. 1. But it may be objected: Seeing these granted to rise from true Conviction, and not to be Dissimulation, or counterfeit Pretence, Why may not they have the worth of true Repentance?

Answ. 1. To answer this: Let me consider, pure Conviction, and enlightned Apprehension, and the Affections begotten of them, are no Argument of true Goodness, where the Light hath not a benign, and free Operation upon the Judgment, an Allurement upon the Will, an Indearment upon the Affections, to turn them to a full Delight, and Satisfaction in God and Holiness, and to a dislike and abhorrence of Sin. For else, the Devils, *who believe and tremble*, *Jam.* 2. 19. must be thought Converts. For who have clearer sight of things than they? *Balaam*, whose Eyes were opened, and spoke so great things of God, and his People, must be concluded a good Man. *Esau* and *Judas*, who had so sad apprehensions of Sin, and their loss by it, must be affirmed to be Penitents. *Nebucadnezar's* and *Darius* his acknowledgments of God must be taken for true Grace. *Herod* his hearing *John Baptist* gladly. *Felix* his trembling at *Paul's* Discourse, may be thought Evidences of true Repentance. *Matth.* 27. 4. *Heb.* 12. 7. *Dan.* 4. 17. *and* 6. 26. *Luk.* 6. 20. *Acts* 24. 25.

Object. 2. But Secondly it may be supposed, because these very Convictions and Affections are not

universal; but we see multitudes go out of the World without them, carrying little better than a decent and civil Respect to Religion, that therefore there is something of God, something Heroick in them, that have them.

Answ. 2. This indeed may be no other, than the wise and good Government of God over the World; whereby he takes care, there should be Testimonies of himself, and the Goodness of his ways; that Atheism, and Wickedness may not carry it, as if all were their own, as if there were an unexceptionable Concurrence on their side against God and Holiness. For as he receives witness from the constant, gracious and religious Lives of good Men, so he constrains some of them, that have lived contrary to him all their lives, to give him glory at last, for the good of others, though without saving benefit to themselves. Which he may justly do, and without any injury to them. Seeing all the Service every Creature can do to him, is infinitely due, he may make use of that which is his own, so far as he pleases. And because *what the word God puts in their mouths*, is not their own, not arising out of the *good treasure of their hearts* (as appears in *Balaam*) therefore their everlasting Condition is not determined by it, but by their constant Course of the former Life, the true Image of their Hearts, as we see in the same *Balaam*, who after died by the *Israelites* hand, whose greatness he had prophesied. Yet I will not deny, but they may have their reward in mitigation of Punishment for any Service done to God.

Num. 23. 5. *Matth.* 12. 35.

Num. 31. 8.

If God did not interpose thus sometimes, he might seem

ſeem wanting in ſomething that concerned him, at leaſt as a gracious Ruler of the World. He therefore over-rules ſome who have lived ſo, as to make a conſtant Argument againſt him, and a future State (ſo far as Wickedneſs could do it) to retract the whole Courſe of their Life, and give their Vote, for what they had ſo long withſtood.

I will yet further add another Cauſe of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, that ſometimes falls out to have a moſt powerful Influence, and yet the Repentance that ſprings from it, is very unſafe to confide in.

Cauſe 4. Dying Men are oft under the play and force of other Mens Reaſon and Religion. For it is a general, and neceſſary Charity of Men affected to Religion themſelves, to offer the ſenſe of it to others, in a time when they think it likely to be accepted, and ſo infinitely neceſſary; which Practice however needful, and moſt commendable in it ſelf, yet by accident may have raiſed higher the opinion of a *Death Bed Repentance*, and is often the occaſion of great Error in the thing it ſelf.

For ſuppoſe a Man followed with ſound and affectionate Perſwaſions, to do all that may be done for his Soul in this exigent; how conceiveable is it, that Man may be ſo far wrought upon, as to entertain a preſent ſenſe of Religion, and yet have no true Life, no Life that ariſes from a true intimate Principle. But as thoſe Bodies of Air taken, and moved by Angels ſeem to perform the Functions of living Bodies, yet do but ſeem to do ſo, for they have no Principle of Life natural to them; but as ſoon, as they are forſaken by the Spirits that made uſe of them, they fly abroad, and diſperſe themſelves. Thus that general ſenſe of Conſcience, that lies ſcat-

tered through the Soul, and unable for action, being gathered together and united by good and holy Applications, and acted thereby, may have force so long, as that Union continues; but that Discourse that holds it together ceasing, it immediately falls asunder, and loses its Efficacy.

The Stone that receives motion from the Hand, that throws it, goes on whilst that motion lasts, when that is spent, it falls to the ground: so the force of Exhortation ceases too often, when he that gives it, leaves those to whom it was given.

The Instrument to which the Musician's Hand gives tune and voice, lies dead when he deserts it: Mans Soul is made by God capable of religious tune and motion, and while a skillful hand plays upon it, it may give that sound very distinctly, and yet have no Life in it self.

The striking of Conscience makes the Sparks fly out, yea and sometime kindle in a flame, and yet it presently dies, because not supplied with a continual Oyl to feed it.

The Mind of one Man is very apt to receive Impressions from another; we see what Passions and Motions are raised by an Eloquent Speaker; how the Understanding is carried captive, while the Orator works upon it: and yet all the Affection thus blown up falls flat again, when the Breath that swell'd it lies still, and is apt to be carried the contrary way by cross Perswasions equally insinuated.

How much more may this be in religious things? Conscience being so easily stirred by such Applications, as we see in *Felix*, though it is as easily becalmed, when sinful Lusts, through the Efficacy of Temptation, are loud and high.

And

And all this is certainly much easilier done near Death, when Men are so soft, that they are apt to take any stamp; so melting, as to be gathered into any mould.

It is possible for one Man's Spirit to carry another for some considerable space of time, as we see in *Jehoiadas* influence upon *Joash*, who was not yet all that time possessed with the things themselves, whereunto he was directed. 2 *King.* 12. 1.

But true Repentance is a Frame set up by the Spirit of God in the Heart, subsisting by that Spirit upon it self, and makes use only of all Helps subordinated to it, by the Wisdom of that Spirit; but doth not live from that Help, but from it self through that Spirit, its supreme Life.

To draw these things therefore to a Sum, It will appear, after all these Causes have done, what they can, these great Errors following are generally found, and always to be suspected in a *Death-Bed Repentance.*

1. In a *Death-Bed Repentance*, There is only a Judgment made of the Case of Eternity, considered by it self, and without a Conterpoise: The Excellency of God and Eternal Things are minded, as they stand out of the Air of Temptation. Now though this be a good Opportunity for the first consideration, yet that Consideration must grow so strong, as to retain the same sense, in the midst of all Pretences from the World and Sathan. Else in the time of Temptation this Repentance falls away. * "For "there may be many true Appre- "henſions, which may make deep

* *Dr.* Jackson, *Book* 10. *Chap.* 23. *Sect.* 3.

"Im-

" Impreſſion not only in the Brain and Phancy, and " upon our Affections, whileſt theſe are calm, and " unprovok'd, and yet both the Apprehenſion and " Impreſſion quickly vaniſh upon the ſtarting, or " provocation of contrary Fancies or Affections.

When the Blood cools in the Veins, and the Spirits are ready to ſtand ſtill, when a Man is no longer to live in the World, *the ſeaſon of the pleaſures of Sin is over*, then to caſt out his Luſts, *What excellent thing does he? does not even nature, whether he will or no, the ſame?* Matth. 5. 46. True Repentance encounters Temptation, and reſiſts unto Blood, when thoſe Pleaſures of Sin are at the height, and the tide of Corruption from within ſwells moſt. *As* Moſes *choſe to ſuffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon*, Heb. 11. 25. although they were in their growing, and aſcending Morning. Repentance will not worſhip that Sun in the East. It is a very ſmall thing to deſpiſe it in the Weſt, and juſt a ſetting; to chooſe Religion, when there is nothing to vie with it.

2. It is not a Conſideration of heavenly Things in their true worth, but only as recommended by the preſent Neceſſity. For who would not die the Death of the Righteous, and have his latter end like his? Every Man at that time would be glad to find, he hath lived well; and he that hath lived worſt, except he be outrageous in Prophaneneſs, will wiſh he had lived better. Eternity at hand gives value to all Holineſs and ſenſe of God, in ſpight of the World; and leſſens all things elſe to *a nothing, and leſs than nothing*; imprints a Ghaſtlineſs and Horror upon all Wickedneſs and Senſu-

Senſuality. *The thirty pieces are nothing worth*, and the *innocent blood above all value*, when Men ſuffer in the Agonies of Conſcience, and Fears of the approaching Judge. *A Houſe full of Silver and Gold* will not buy a Man to reſiſt God, when indeed he appears to him; *when the terrible Majeſty* opens it ſelf, what is ſo precious, that Men *will not fling to the Bats and Moles?* When the Breath is going out of the Noſtrils, how precious is Repentance, Faith, a Pardon in Chriſt, a happy Eternity, to thoſe, who have heretofore ſlighted them, as the off-ſcouring of all things?

Mat. 27. 3. *Numb.* 22. 18. *Iſai.* 2. 20.

But theſe things are always ſo rich, Wiſdom is always ſo precious, that it diſdains to borrow Eſteem from a minute of Extremity; and therefore it moſt often falls out, that thoſe who would none of its counſel, but deſpiſed all its Reproof, when they come to ſeek it early, cannot find it, but it laughs at their Calamity, as Men laugh at the unhappineſs of Fools, that would not be corrected in their Folly, till their Miſery confute their Confidence.

3. From hence it follows, That this Repentance is a Choice, when there is no other Choice: If a Man loved his Sins, or the World never ſo paſſionately, he muſt leave them; if he diſliked God, and his Holineſs, and an everlaſting Abode with him, to the utmoſt; yet he is even forced upon them, or daſhed upon an Eternal Miſery, and Unhappineſs, which it is impoſſible to chooſe: And therefore though he would not chooſe the holy ways of God, if he might ſtill enjoy former Vanity, yet that being

out

out of his reach and way, he must take what is to be had. The Sense therefore is no more than this, All these things are good, when a Man is just a Dying; but while he lives, and can have the World, they are troublesom and unprofitable: Death makes them good, upon this account only, because else there would be something worse, and there can no longer be any thing better. A Man is now willing to offer a Life he hath not to give, but Eternal Life is not worth any part of that Life he thinks in his power to do any thing else with. Let us then observe at what rate it is set; for to use *Tertullian*'s words in another Case, we may thus Reason. * "What a mean "sort of good is this, that only "excels Punishment, which needs "the worst of States for a Foil to "it self, that it may be thought "Good? It is good to repent, and "be saved, because who can dwell "with everlasting Burnings? But "if it must purchase the Reputation of being Good from Evil, "it is not so much a Good, as a "lower degree of Evil; which "while the greater Evil Eclipses it "is compelled as it were to accept "the name of a good, being driven upon the confines of Goodness by the Violence of greater "Evil.

* *Quale bonum hoc est, quod melius est, pœna, quod non potest videri bonum, nisi pessimo comparatum; ut ideo bonum sit resipiscere, quia deterius est ardere. Cæterum si per mali collationem cogitur bonum dici, non tam bonum est, quam genus mali inferioris, quod altiori malo obscuratum ad nomen boni impellitur.* Tertul. *De Monogamia. Chap.* 3.

4. This Repentance is not the Free, but inslaved Judgment and Choice of the Soul; as Men cast out Goods

Goods in a Storm, and receive a Power to Rule over them, that they cannot endure, but that it is too ſtrong for them. Men are afraid what God will do to them, therefore they ſubmit. His Enemies in Heart are found Lyers to him, they flatter him with their Mouth, as *Julian* oppreſſed by the Almightineſs of Chriſt, is ſtoried to have cried out, *Viciſti Galilæe*, Thou haſt overcome me, *Galilean.* Thus they are overcome by Death, and the apprehenſion of Judgment. In the ſight and view of the Danger Men reſolve to part with their Sins. Let but that remove, they call for their Sins again, as Mariners wiſh for their Goods after the Storm. They throw up their Luſts in their ſickneſs, but drink them in when their trouble is paſt, *as the Dog returns to his vomit*, 2 Pet. 2. 22. In all this there is nothing of the love of God.

5. In this Repentance, the Soul of it is generally a pitiful mean Self-love, even the meaneſt kind imaginable, wherein a Man conſiders himſelf as a Creature in being, and likely, or at leaſt poſſible to be for ever; without any apprehenſion of himſelf, as a rational Creature made for God, and the Enjoyment of him, in conforming with whom his Happineſs conſiſts, and in the reſting for ever in his love. Of this part he hath no diſtinct apprehenſion, only he would be happy though he knows not what it is, or rather he would not be miſerable; yet even that he truly underſtands not. But as the Jews ſaid to Chriſt, when he ſpake to them of the Bread of Life, *Lord ever more give us this bread*; and yet were ſcandalized at his Explanation of himſelf to be that Bread, ſo far as to leave him. And the Phariſees hearing *of the Vineyard to be let out to other Huſ-* *John 6.* 34.

bandmen

Luk. 20. 16. *band-men*, and the Judgment upon themſelves to be executed, Cried out, *God forbid*, yet run on in the Sin, that brought it upon them.

This little point of Self-love into which all is crowded is ennobled with no ſight of the Excellency of the things themſelves, or a due Eſtimation of them, as the true pleaſure, and joy of an Immortal Spirit.

This is not that allowable love of a Man's ſelf, which incircles it ſelf within the love of God, as the leſſer Circle is comprehended by the greater, but this either leaves out that love wholly, or debaſes it to baſeſt ſelf.

Let us now compare both ſides together, and ſee how much true Repentance differs from that, which is always to be feared, leſt it ſhould be the height of the Death-Bed: And of that which hath been ſpoken, this is the Sum,

True Repentance is the moſt free Election of the Soul inabled by the Grace of God, upon a clear, and juſt Dictate of the Judgment, attended with ſincereſt Affection, to give up it ſelf to God through Jeſus Chriſt, and when it is moſt it ſelf, not under any irregular fear or conſtraint, and (at leaſt would be the ſame) in a time, when it hath all the probability that can be to lay hold upon things preſent.

The other Repentance ariſes from a Soul all troubled, and diſcompoſed with the throws of Death, the fears of Hell, the Doubts what will become of it in another World, the Uproars of a guilty Conſcience; when it ſuppoſes it ſelf neceſſarily at the full ſtop of its former Courſes, by being cut off from longer Life, in the midſt of all which ariſe vehement Reſolutions to turn from Sin to God, and poſſibly with

with many fair Apparences, but without opportunity to give proof of themſelves.

Let any one Judge between theſe two Repentances, and accordingly even counſel himſelf concerning them.

Yet I muſt acknowledge this Diſcourſe ſubject to theſe following Limitations.

1. That the Arguments I have inſiſted upon prevail not only againſt a *Death-Bed Repentance*, but againſt all Repentances, that have no higher Spirit to move them, than what I have now repreſented; from hence therefore we may take the trial of our Repentance in general, for though a Death-Bed is moſt ſubject to theſe miſtakes, yet whatever Repentance falls under them, is by reaſon of them invalid; and the later any Repentance is, or the more it is occaſioned by any Extremity, which it doth not out-live, the more ſubject it is to them.

2. What I have ſaid is not at all to be underſtood of the perfecting and conſummating Repentance, by higher and fuller Acts towards God at Death, though enforced by the preſent Circumſtances of the Caſe. For true Repentance running through the whole life, takes advantage of every thing, much more of ſo conſiderable an Opportunity to unite all our ſtrength for God, as a Death-bed brings with it. All that hath been ſpoken is deſigned againſt truſting to the *Extreme Unction* of a dying Repentance, juſt then begun.

3. I have before reſolved upon that tendereſt Doctrin, that it is poſſible among all the unhappy Circumſtances of a Dying-Bed, there yet may be this true Act of the Underſtanding, Will, and Affections turning to God; and if there be this, it would be the ſame and alike, however theſe Circumſtances alter.

alter, and then it excels thoſe temporary Amendments undertaken in the freeſt times of Life. But becauſe it is but poſſible and ſo almoſt impoſſible, ſo unhappy a Caſe, (as not to have repented till juſt we die) ſhould fall out ſo happily, the Intention of this Diſcourſe ſtands good notwithſtanding.

4. I acknowledge, the choice of the Soul can never be ſo free, but it muſt be ſubject to infinitely the moſt worthy and preponderating conſiderations of the love and goodneſs of God, the Redemption of Chriſt, the greatneſs of eternal Happineſs moſt indearing on one ſide; of the fear and terror of the Lord, the loſs of a Soul, everlaſting perdition, moſt perſwaſive on the other ſide; ſo that if a Man cannot be free in his choice of Religion, except he chooſe it without the force of any ſuch conſideration, he can never be at all free, for theſe are on all ſides of him: And further, there is always the ſupream motion of the Grace of God, which does not leſſen, but ſteer and exalt the freedom of the Will towards God.

The difference then between true and falſe Repentance in this particular is the ſame, that is, between juſt and rational conſideration of all the motives of Hope and Fear; and the hurry of them moving us not intellectually, but as a Tempeſt, or with the force of a meer Engine. 2. Between the higheſt reaſons carrying the chiefeſt force, and leading along with them the lower ones, and the lower doing all without the higher, for want of which they are Senſual or Helliſh. 3. Between the government of meer Providence, and of the Spirit of God. 4. Between the Repentance of *Cain*, *Eſau*, *Saul*, *Judas*, and the Repentance of *David*, *Manaſſeh*, *Peter*, and *Paul*.

5. I

5. I acknowledge the first Preparations of the Soul by God for himself, may be with a great deal of noise and confusion; *Clouds and Darkness are the Dust of his Feet, Storms go before him to prepare his way*; while these last, there cannot be a serene calm Act of the Soul, and he that doth not live till he *hear that still Voice*, in which God is, is in great danger of being lost in the Storm. But if out of this Darkness and Confusion, a holy and gracious Settlement proceed, it is not the worse for being so introduced, but is agreeable with the usual method of God.

The fourth Head I proposed, is to weigh the Repentance *of the Crucified Malefactor* against our common *Death-Bed Repentances*; which duly performed will be of great force against Presumption, rather than minister it any Confidence.

For we shall find so much gathered together, and pressed down into it, that as Jewels have their Riches in a little room, so his short Life of Penitency had an Age of Repentance in it.

It is so composed of Extraordinaries, that it can give very little encouragement in ordinary Cases, except just thus much; that Repentance at Death is no absolute impossibility.

1. Let us observe how his Repentance look'd to the several parts of Repentance; for though it had but little time in this World to breath in, yet with extraordinary diligence, it was busie in all the great, and most concerning Points. Yet I account this of the least Remark in the History of his Repentance, because it is easily imitable, That in which it Excelled, was the Evidences of Sincerity it carried.

1. Yet take notice of his Sense and Acknowledgment of Sin, which was not only a Confession of Words, but of his very Soul; for, deliberating things in a Moment, he pronounced himself worthy of the Condemnation and Punishment he endured. I confess this is not so infrequent in those, who forfeited their Lives to Justice, but how oft is it rather a Formality, than the inward sense of the Mind condecently affected? and possibly if we look upon the out-side of things, we can find no great difference between him and others. Yet it is a necessary part of Repentance, *The sacrifice of God is a broken and contrite heart*, Psal. 51. 17.

Magnum est pœnitentiæ signum in pœna sua acquiescere. Grot. *in locum.*

2. In his Repentance lay a lively Faith in Christ; first resting upon the principle, And truth of the thing; That *Christ was a just Person*, that he *had a Kingdom*; and then a particular Application to him for Mercy, *Lord remember me when thou comest in thy Kingdom.*

3. A quick sense of Eternity supplied Vigor to his Repentance, an evident sight of something beyond this world. For what more excites the Soul, and shews it the necessity of a gracious Change, than an everlasting Condition appearing to it? To this end hath *Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. of which this Penitent made a very full Confession; *Lord remember me when thou comest in thy Kingdom.* He saw a Kingdom beyond the Cross and Death.

4. An earnest desire to promote and propagate a sense of God into the Hearts of others was the immediate fruit of this Malefactors Repentance. He admo-

admonishes the Impenitent Thief on the other side, *Dost thou not fear God?* He had such a Reverence of God, that he expostulates the want of it in the other as monstrous and horrid. His design was also exceeding Compassionate, as well as Pious: For it was an Endeavour full of Charity, desirous his guilty Fellow-sufferer should be brought into the same Condition with himself. We want much of the Compassion due to the Souls of others, because we are so insensible of the misery of our own; and taste but little of the sweetness of Reconciliation and Grace: But when we drink largely out of these Fountains, we derive the Streams upon others, that have flowed upon our selves.

All these things were evidently much to the purpose, if we look upon themselves: Yet were there nothing more extraordinary in them, we might doubt whether they were any more than the good Mood, into which Principles of Conscience excited by the unhappiness his Condition might put him: Let us then consider the Evidence, that all this was truly Supernatural; for I account it no Injury to so memorable a Repentance to suppose, that as great and fair an out-side may have fall'd of Paradise, into which he entred. But,

2. The acknowledgment he made of Christ gives testimony to him in two things.

1. That it was made, when Christ was under all the Infamy, and Misery of a shameful and painful Death, and nothing to make such a Greatness, as he ascribed to him probable. Among us that in general Language speak honourably of Christ, Professions of him are cheap, and prove nothing. But if one bred in Turcism, or Judaism, should confess him,

it would argue much more; yet not so much as in this Malefactor, who saw him in so despicable a State: Whereas now so great a part of the World acknowledging him, hath carried him up to Heaven, as it were *in that Cloud, wherein he ascended long ago*, and hid *the reproach of his Cross* in so high a Glory, especially among us.

Acts 1. 9.

To confess him in his worst estate, and before any thing of the Consequence was known, was very great: * *Christ was revealed to him, not by Flesh and Blood*; but by God himself. Such an Heroickness is indeed necessary to assure a *Death-Bed Repentance*, which had need be as great, as it is late, when Men do not live to see the ordinary fruits of it.

Mat. 16. 17.

* *Extrema fides, sed non minima.* Aug. *Serm.* 122. *de Temp.*

He that could see Christ, and his Glory, through so dark a Vail, had *his Eyes anointed with that Eye-Salve*, Christ speaks of. †

† *Ad rem credendam a sensibus remotissimam excitatus est.* Grot.

We find the Apostles, who had seen his Miracles, heard his Divine Discourses, made long Acknowledgments of him, were fearfully shaken by this Assault *of the power of Darkness upon him*; even to a Despair, that he was the Christ. But while they were in a swoon of Faith,

Rev. 3. 18.

Quando passus est, omnes discipuli desperaverunt quod ipse esset Christus. A latrone victi sunt Apostoli, qui tunc credidit, quando illi defecerunt. Aug. *in* Psal. 68.

this

this Faith with Christ triumphed over Principalities and Powers, even on the Cross.

We looking upon the things of Christianity in the common Profession of the Nation, It is a hard thing for us to see them otherwise, than that casts them; as it would be for those that have known nothing but the Religion of *Mahomet*, Paganism, or the Jewish Synagogue, to take up upon the sudden the Doctrin of Christianity against their own.

We believing not with our own Faith, but Vulgar Opinion, easily make a Confession of Christ; yet oftentimes the Power and saving Effect of it is far from us, as from those that are Strangers to him: sometimes they that come from the East, and from the West, sit down in the Kingdom of God, when the Children of the Kingdom are thrust out.

The Acknowledgment of Christ in those Times, was a much fairer Evidence, than it can be now; yet without inward Grace was nothing then; much less must it needs be to us, who have it made ready to our hands by Education and common Consent in it; we must therefore the more narrowly observe, what Characters the Truth of Christ imprints upon our Hearts.

2. This Acknowledgment was made without any manner of Inducement, or Temptation to it, from outward advantages, it could possibly afford; but rather an increase of Shame and Scorn was to be expected from it; and that if it were possible, he should suffer

Tanto namque pondere appensum est, tantumque valuit apud eum, qui novit hæc appendere, quod confessus est Dominum Crucifixum, quantum si fuisset pro Domino Crucifixus. Aug. *De Anima & ejus Origine.*

the second time for such a Confession, and become of a Malefactor a Martyr. Nay further, there was no Dictate of Natural Conscience, that could incline him to it; for that runs not into the Confession of Christ, nor is any way quieted concerning former Sins through such a Confession; but eyes God only, and Moral Righteousness: Lastly, no general Tradition prompted him to it, the Jews at that time condemning him. But in us, all Applications to Christ are securing our selves in the common Barque, and keep us from being censured, as prophane, and irreligious Persons. For to die without any address to Christ, is accounted very ungodly, and senseless of a Future State; but to deny him, monstrous and desperate. Further, Christianity is incorporated with our natural Principles, so that they never move, or heave themselves in us, but that also rises with them.

Now it is of great Importance in the tryal of Sincerity, upon what Grounds and Motives we do, what do; and the more we can clear it from inferiour Springs, the more certainly it is *Grace descending from above, and resting upon us*, Jam. 1. 17.

Every one therefore that would justifie a *Death-Bed Repentance*, must exceed all common sorts of Repentance, else he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nay he must do something, that in the little space of time, he hath to do it in, must equal a Course of amendment of Life; must be as great in him, as this Repentance of the Thief.

And do but think, if our Faith were to cut those waves, his was to pass, to row against such a Stream, *to remove such mountains*, among how many thousands

ſands there would be found a Faith to do it; we ſhould immediately be ſtopp'd; or ſunk, and caſt away, and loſt. Yet ſuch are they we are to paſs through into Eternal Life, though of different Circumſtances from his.

But after all I will allow it poſſible, there might be a ſecret flaw in this whole Penitent's Deportment, we now inſiſt upon; and that it far'd with him as with ſome among us, who after a wicked and debauched Life fly to the Sanctuary of the Romiſh Religion (*as* Joab *to the horns of the Altar*, 1 King. 2. 28.) To Reconciliation wherewith Hopeleſneſs of any good from that they have ſo long ſinned againſt, and natural Superſtition hurry them. So this Perſon hearing a great Fame of Chriſt, and obſerving his pretence high, might lay hold upon him in a deſperate Caſe, if peradventure any thing of good might follow on it: It being very incidental to the Nature of Man to caſt himſelf upon Religion, when all elſe fails, and upon one new to him, when he hath offended againſt the old one, beyond hope of Pardon; whence Men generally receive this Recompence, that Conſcience is put into amuſe, having nothing at preſent to ſay againſt it.

And had this been the top of his Caſe, that it had been thus, could it have been ſaving? Nay, that it might poſſibly have been thus, though indeed it had been otherwiſe, yet this very liableneſs to ſuch a miſtake had unſpeakably abated the rational Security, and ſafety of his Condition, ſo that there had remained good cauſe for Conſcience to have miſtruſted which way his Condition would have fallen to Eternity.

3. The Third thing therefore, that gave him, and gives to all Ages undoubted Teſtimony of the Truth of his Converſion, is the immediate atteſtation to that Truth and Sincerity of it, *This day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe.* Now that Repentance which enters into Heaven, that paſſes into Paradiſe, not hinder'd by thoſe *flaming Cherubs of Divine Truth*; that which is *within the Door, before the Maſter of the Houſe is riſen up and hath ſhut it to*, that is true Repentance and proſperous, and ſucceſsful, how late ſoever. But to know that it is true, when it is ſo late, needs a Voice from Heaven, or ſomething proportional to it, to verifie it, as is after to be urged.

Luke 13. 25.

The laſt thing I take notice of in this Repentance, is the unparallellable Circumſtance of time wherein it was accepted.

1. It was in the time of a publick act of mercy to the World, *God was in love to Mankind giving his only begotten Son. Chriſt was giving himſelf at this time.* Therefore that there ſhould be an Inſtance and Monument of this Mercy, ſeem'd condecent to ſo great and ſolemn a time.

Joh. 3. 16.

Eph. 5. 25.

2. This Penitent ſtood cloſe to that Sacrifice, that was offering it ſelf up to God: He ſtood within the Savour, the Odor, the Incenſe of it: That Sacrifice, *that purchaſes men from a vain converſation*; that draws down all the Bleſſings of Salvation; that therefore the force of it ſhould reach ſo near it ſelf, is not ſtrange: I know no nearneſs of place ſignifies

1 Pet. 18.

fies at all. How many saw his Miracles, heard him Preach, look'd upon him Dying without benefit? yet was his Presence also, as he pleased, full of Divine effects. That therefore there should be an experiment of so great a Balsom, just as it was preparing, was most suitable.

3. It was in the time that *Christ was triumphing over Principalities and Powers, and making a shew of them openly upon the very Cross.* * That he should bear off in the Field the prey taken out of the mouth of the proud Foe, was very agreeable to the expectation so great a Conqueror raises. *Colos.* 2. 15.

**Vicem versam reddidit Christus Diabolo; quemadmodum Diabolus depravando hominem abstulerat de Paradiso, sic Christus latronem confitentem erueret de inferno: Ille de interdicto ligno præsumentem decepit; Iste pendentem de pœnali ligno redemit.* Aug. *Serm.* 122. *De Temp.*

But whoever considers the Thief on the other side not converted, or saved, will find Cause to observe; The Salvation of Christ doth not sweep the World, but is rarelier vouchsafed than we think; That a man may die without going to Heaven; That the mercy of the Gospel is most arbitrary and sovereign, chusing and leaving; That it depends not on humane Expectation, or any Superstitious phancies, that have been raised about the Cross of Christ; for so much appears by one only taken here, the other left, though upon the Cross together with Christ, and near him in the great and mediatory Act; who that considers will not tremble to think of one left in his sins, falling down

down into Hell from such a Heaven as Christ in his great Act of Redemption.

And although it may be truly said, it was the fault, and negligence, and obstinacy of the Unconverted Malefactor, that he did not use aright the Grace offered, or the Light vouchsafed him; yet it doth not alleviate the danger, for it still remains very uncertain to whom God will give a Heart to use Opportunities aright, though they have them from God with an equal Liberality, as those that do so improve them.

But indeed, the Supremacy of Grace is here very much acknowledged by all; that a Ray of the Divinity of Christ with infinite kindness smote his Soul. * I infer nothing from that increase, the Evangelist *Matth.* c. 27. 44. gives the Miracle, That he was Converted after he had joined with the other Malefactor in reproaching Christ; Because † some Interpreters question it.

* *Nova & insolita quædam divinæ virtutis efficacia, in exemplum omnibus seculis memorabile, &c.* Grot. *In locum.*

† Hieron. *In locum.*

Upon the whole then of this Example, let Men that would be befriended by a *Dying Repentance*, examine whether these things found in this Example, are like to meet upon them. I will not say, till there be a time, a fulness of time, wherein Christ shall again die for Sinners, such a Repentance is not to be expected; but I may safely say, he that in the Observation of this Example trusts himself to a *Dying Repentance* should startle his

Beneficium multis modis insigne & non temere trahendi in consequentias exempli. Grot. *In locum.*

his Presumption with this Interrogation, Will there ever be such a Conjunction, as was here, again, while the World endures?

I come now to the last Head of down-right Arguments against committing our Eternal State to a *Death-Bed Repentance.*

1. It is against all the Prudence and Providence of a Man, seeing no Man knows what kind of Death he shall die; whether it will afford him the possibilities of Repenting: How many die suddenly, and in so short a Breath, that they have not time to desire Mercy in general? How many of Apoplexies seizing upon the very Top of Sense at first? Many by Phrensies have no rational Motions of themselves; innumerable Accidents (and oft-times made dreadful by the Wickedness wherewith they have been accompanied) have snatch'd away Men in a Moment. *Such are taken away living and in his wrath before the Pots can feel the Thorns*, before ever those hasty flames of Motion towards God blown up for such an Extremity can be raised. Such are taken in the very manner without so much time as to put off the Every-Day Habit of Sin, *like those that were carried out dead in their Coats*, Lev. 10. 5. Psal. 58. 9.

And though from the ordinary manner of Dying, we may hope for the warning ordinarily given; yet we see others surprized, who have had the same reasons of Hope with our selves. We cannot then without madness trust our selves to accident, *or boast our selves of to morrow*, of which we know not what is within it, seeing the future is wholy concealed from us: *They that make a Covenant with* Prov. 27. 1.

with death, and are at an agreement with Hell, meet with nothing but Perfidiouſneſs, when the overflowing Scourge approaches them, and the ſtorm of Hail rends their refuge of lies, Iſa. 28. 18. *&c.* If we were provided againſt all, but one ſingle Accident, even that may fall upon us with the ruin, that all the reſt could bring.

Let a Man examine, whether he can chooſe his Death, and deſign the Circumſtances of it, and place every thing juſt as he would have it, and thereby afford himſelf the Seaſon he thinks neceſſary for ſuch a purpoſe. But who is ſo fooliſh as to undertake this? He that builds upon Ground that is none of his own, is like to have all his Frame overturned at the pleaſure of another: God derides this Folly, who hath all things in his own hand, and diſpoſes them without our knowledge:

Jam. 4. 13. *Go too ye that ſay, To day or to morrow we will go to ſuch a place,*

Pſal. 104. 3. *and buy, and ſell, and get gain:*

But oh miſerable is he that thinks, as God, *to lay the Beams of his Chambers*, that he builds for Eternal Reſt *in the Waters*, the flowing incertainty of future Time, where he hath nothing to do; and overſees the proper Reſt appointed him by God, ſeeing both his Preſumption, and his prophane Negligence are likely to be puniſhed together. For indeed he that is wickedly prodigal, of what God affords him, as his, and is bold to entrench upon the future which is Gods, when he comes to it, finds it full and poſſeſſed already, with what God hath provided for it; ſo there is no room for his Project, but he periſhes for ever in the Diſappointment.

2. It

2. It is againſt our Duty, and all the Obligations, that lie on us; For it is as if a Man ſhould ſay to God, I know it is my Duty, and the end of my Life, and the Providence thou exerciſeſt towards me, that I ſhould now ſerve thee, and give up my ſelf to thee; But I beg of thee, that while I live, I may live in my Luſts and Senſualities, and when I am to die and go out of the World, and ſhall have no more time and leiſure for any thing elſe, I ſhall then have nothing to do, but to look towards thee, and beſeech thy Favour, and leave my Sins: I deſire thee therefore to ſtay for my Repentance till then, and when I can no longer enjoy the World, then to grant me a Kingdom with thy ſelf, and the Fruition of thy own Happineſs: For though I ſhall diſhonour thee in the tract of my Life, yet I will retract it all in a Breath. How horribly contemptuous of God doth this appear, how Affronting and Blaſphemous? and yet this is the very ſenſe of Deferring Repentance, till Death.

Odibileeſt apud Deum, quando homo ſub fiducia pœnitentiæ in ſenectutem reſervatæ liberius peccat. Auguſt. *Serm.* 120.

This is the greateſt Immorality and Irreligion; for it deſtroys the reaſon of our Being on Earth, which is *to ſerve our Generation*, or *the courſe of our Life according to the Will of God, to glorifie him here on Earth.* It deſtroys the Service, yet flies upon the Reward; as if God were bound to make Men happy, becauſe he had made them, and that he had made them, firſt to take the Delights he moſt abhors, to

Acts 13. 36.

John 17. 4.

diſhonour

diſhonour him, by deforming his Workmanſhip, and violating his Laws, and the good order he hath ſet in the World; and yet after all becauſe he had made them, to give them a Bleſſedneſs ſo inſuperably great, that he could find no greater; and by no means to hurt or puniſh them for Sin, though all the Juſtice, that ever was known to Man, requires Puniſhment of Offenders, as much as the reward of Deſert; elſe all Government would be loſt.

Thus therefore to imagine of God is to bring down in our own Thoughts thoſe great Attributes of Juſtice and Wiſdom, into a fooliſh and unreaſonable Pity, and only for this end, that there may be a Licentiouſneſs in Wickedneſs and Impiety.

And ſeeing upon the ſame account, all the Men in the World may adjourn their Love and Obedience to God to their going out of it; it might come to paſs, that this State ſhould have been prepared only as a Stage for the Vices and Exorbitancies of Men to have acted themſelves upon, and then they to have removed to Heaven; when as though theſe have large ſcope indeed now, as things are, yet their Licentiouſneſs is daily rebuked by the threats of the Goſpel, by the holy Converſations of thoſe, that have left their Sins by Repentance, and puniſhed by an Eternal Judgment hereafter.

But who that conſiders the infinite Goodneſs and Greatneſs of God, *that in his hand is our life, and breath, and all our ways*, can think it equal, that God ſhould have only the faint and feeble Services of a Death-Bed, for all the Preſervation and Mercy vouchſafed through the courſe of our lives?

Or who can think it conſiſtent with his Honour to give Men Laws, that point upon the Government of

of themselves here, and that he should at so general a rate, as the necessity of Mens manner of living requires, accept of such a Commutation, or exchange for the Obedience due to them, as a *Death-Bed Repentance*?

Or least of all, who can believe? that Jesus Christ should come a Redeemer into the World, *a Redeemer from all Iniquity, a purchaser from a vain Conversation, that he might have a peculiar People zealous of good works; who should look for the great day, and his glorious appearance, by a patient expectation and continuance in well-doing*; to which he hath also tied them by the most strict Obligations, that created Nature is capable of, and yet that this in a manner should be wholly frustrated, even in those supposed to be redeemed by him? Tit. 2. 14. Rom. 2. 7.

How shall such a Man then be able to look God or Jesus Christ the Saviour in the face, that hath but just begun to acknowledge him by some weak Devotions to him, extorted even of necessity, and given the bulk of his time to Sin; that hath sacrified the *Male* of his Flock to Lust, and even with impious design kept the corrupt thing for God? *Mal.* 1. 14.

3. If we truly understand the nature of Repentance, and that it is the Gift and Grace of God: It is,

1. A great Presumption upon that Grace, to think we can call it down from Heaven at our own need, who have offered so much Injury to the motions of it, vouchsafed in the time of our Life; we do not consider, that this Grace designs its own Glory, and

and teaches to live *Godly, righteously, soberly, now in this present World*, and therein to wait for the Manifestation of everlasting Glory; and thus we are *seek for honour, glory, and immortality.*

Tit. 2. 13.

Rom. 2. 7.

Now that they that have bidden defiance to this Grace so long, should bring it down from the Clouds in their Dying Moments, to convey them to Happiness, is to make so cheap of that infinitely precious Goodness, that whoever aright considers the Case, must needs infinitely abhor the thoughts. Yet this is the necessity of such Mens Condition, that they must either think themselves worthy thus to becken the Grace of God, or they must perish for ever. They enter then a contest of Precedency and Superiority with this Grace, and decide against it: That it is fit for that to stoop and humble, yea to prostitute it self, rather than they should be for ever Miserable: yea rather than they should have been obliged to a Holy Life.

Πολλαῖς γὰρ ψυχαῖς μετανοία χρῆσθαι βουληθείσαις οὐκ ἐπέτρεψεν ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἀπὸ παλιῤῥοίας εἰς τύμπαλον ἀνεχώρησαν. Phil. *in Allego.*

2. It is for a Man to desire God, to Mis-time his Grace, for the Season of it is the present offer in the Gospel. *Now is the time accepted, now is the day of Salvation.* It is to desire God to give him a Spring in Autumn, or Winter; when the time of the Patience of God is over, to expect the Salvation of God, now God who hath with infinite Wisdom and Equality weighed out Times and Seasons,

2 Cor. 2. 9.

Seaſons, and made every *thing beautiful in its time*, doth not reverſe his own Appointments to ſerve the Folly of Man, who have not *known their times*, and the *things of their peace in their day.* Eccleſ. 3. 11. and 9. 12. Luke 19. 42.

For can it ſeem reaſonable, that Mountains ſhould remove out of their places? and Rocks wander from their Situation? That Man more unintelligent, *than the Swallow and Crane that obſerve their appointed times, might not be inſnared by the evil times that fall ſuddenly upon them*: He that truſts then to ſuch a Repentance, doth, as it were; reſolve to be ſaved by Miracle, or elſe periſh. Jer. 8. 7. Eccleſ. 9. 12.

3. Men do not conſider the Jealouſie of God, nor are afraid *of his Oath* againſt them, that *harden their Hearts and do not hear his voice to day*; ſo that ſome, who have trifled with the Grace of God, *ſeek him early and do not find him.* The *Iſraelites* that ſaid, *Whither ſhall we go up, when they were commanded to go up, and poſſeſs the land*; when they would have gone up afterwards and fought for it, were rejected by God. So in *Zechary*, God gives account of that great Judgment of their Captivity, concerning which, though *Moſes*, *Samuel* and *Job* had interceded, he would not have heard. *As when I cried they would not hear, ſo it came to paſs that they cried, and I would not hear*, Zech. 7. 13. Heb 3.9,10,11. Deut. 1. 28.

Many fail of the Grace of God that prophanely ſell their Birth-right for a tranſitory Satisfaction,

Heb. 12. 16, 17. *and find no place for their Repentance, or of Gods Repentance* in favour towards them, though they ſeek it careſully, and with Tears. While Men are buſie in fulfilling the corrupt Deſires of their ſinful Fleſh, and make ſlight of the Mercy, that ſo freely preſents their Souls; a ſilent Decree paſſes againſt them; that though it makes no noiſe in their Ears, yet ſeals them in blindneſs, and hardneſs, ſo that their Souls are for ever cloſed therein: For who can open what is ſhut by ſo powerful and awful a Hand?

4. It is impoſſible to a Man to die with good compoſure of Mind, that truſts to a Dying Repentance; for let the Caſe be thus ſtated, That Repentance, which will not inable a Man to a holy Life, is not ſaving; ſuppoſe a Man then in a Dying Sickneſs, making great acknowledgment of Sin, full of Reſolutions of leaving Sin, and this Man recovering and peforming nothing, but ſliding back into the former Wretchedneſs of Life; this Repentance however ſerious, and earneſt it ſeemed, would not have ſaved him, if he had died; he had periſhed in his Sins, and his falſe Repentance together: For that his Repentance was truly inferior to his Sins, appears, in that as ſoon as ever that is over, which gave it a ſeeming Advantage, his Sins throw off that Repentance; but true Repentance always *overcomes*; that Repentance therefore could not be true.

Rev. 2. 7, *&c.*

And if Repentance be falſe and counterfeit, there is no amendment of it in Eternity; when once the *Maſter of the Houſe is riſen up, and hath ſhut to the Door*, there is no entrance: While the *fooliſh Virgins*

Luke 13. 25.

Virgins too late understanding Mat. 25. 3, *&c.* the Error *of Oyl in their Lamps only, and not in their Vessels*, went to correct it, by buying Oyl, *They were shut out*, and *no knocking* powerful enough for their Admission.

Yea though a Man may seem to be well quieted, and comforted, and to have the Testimony of the Spirit of God, yet all this may be but a Delusion, and *Satan in an Angel of light*; for though they that have truly this Testimony, may be supposed to know it is that true Spirit; yet they that have it not, may have some- 2 Cor. 11. 14. thing, they so strongely imagine to be it, that thereby they may be deceived. This Testimony therefore must be proportionable to the assurance, this Dying Man had from Christ; else even a Man that dies safe, must die in such an unexpressible Torment of Mind, that it had been much better he had enjoyed no such seasons of Sin, than only endure that. And who can presume so upon God, as to promise himself such a train of Miracles to carry him not only to Heaven, but without those Agonies of Horror that are like Hell, after so long Impenitency?

Thus on all sides it is most necessary for every one to Repent while he may behold the Truth of his Repentance in the ordinary Fruits of a holy Life; and see himself in all the Circumstances of Temptation, change of Condition, Varieties, which Life and the Course of it carry along with it: For that is often by length of time cast up, and appears upon the Surface, that lay concealed at the bottom, till such a Concurrence of things gives it the advantage to rise.

I understand nothing that can be objected to this last Argument I have used to disable the Confidence of such a Repentance, except this.

It may be supposed, the Repentance that is full of passionate and affectionate Motions towards God, though amidst the fears of Death, may be good, till it be blotted out by returns to Sin, and therefore if it be taken in the just time, while it is good; that is, if a Man dies before it be reversed, it may serve the great purpose of Eternity.

This Supposition I must confess hath a seeming Countenance from that particular place, *Ezek.* 33. 12. *The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness.*

But if the scope of Scripture-Discourse in general, or the very sense of Morality be taken in the Case, no Man may trust so great a weight here; For Christ looks upon *the stony ground* with the same Eye, *while it receives the word with joy, as when by and by it is offended*; and it was therefore truly no better at first than at last. *The House that is not founded upon the Rock*, is as ill founded in the Calm, as in the Storm, only the Storm discovers what it was. Morality it self requires a better rooting of virtuous Habits, than that they should be set only in loose Ground, thrown up by Extremity of Condition, and not in the Soil it self.

Mat. 1. 3. 20, 21.

Mat. 7. 26.

That Repentance which will not bear the trial of time, will much less sustain the Test of Eternity, wherein every thing that stands, must be solid and sub-

ſubſtantial: Things that ſuffer the loſs of themſelves, when they are tried *by mans day*, will ſuddenly be conſumed by the hotter Beams of God. 1 *Cor.* 4. 3. That hath need of good Founding, that muſt undergo an Eternity, and have all advantage of Concoction, that muſt be laid up for ever; which the ſhort Moments of a Death-Bed without a miraculous Aſſiſtance will not allow. The Fruit of it generally, like *that Haſty-ripe, periſhes while it is in the Hand*: This Iſai. 28. 4. Repentance gives up the Ghoſt, as ſoon as it is born.

Now as for that place in *Ezekiel*, ſo much vexed with Controverſie, I do not think it convenient for me to intangle a Diſcourſe intended wholly for practice with the Perplexities of it.

Only I am concerned to ſhew, that it doth not afford the favour ſuppoſed to this kind of Repentance. For firſt, We muſt not miſtake *the day* it ſpeaks of, as if it ſignified ſo ſtrait a compaſs of Time, as a Day; but that Seaſon wherein either the righteous Man waſts and deſtroys his Righteouſneſs; or a Sinner over comes his Vitious Cuſtoms and Inclinations, neither of which are uſually done on the ſudden. Secondly, *The turning from Wickedneſs* intended is certainly a ſincere and impartial one, and not ſuch as we have rendred this Dying Repentance ſuſpicious to be. Thirdly, It muſt be juſtified *by a walking in the Statutes and Judgments of God, and doing that is right*; that is, by a continued Reformation, which will leaſt agree to this Repentance, and therefore this place of Scripture will not protect this Suppoſition, but rather damns it.

Having now in the foregoing Diſcourſe, in a practical and perſwaſive way, endeavoured to engage Men to a timely Repentance, by ſetting out the hazard of a late one: I have thought it neceſſary, to make the ſtate of the whole Doctrin, as exact as I can, by conſidering whatever might with fair appearance of Scripture-Reaſon call into queſtion and ſcruple, what I have grounded my Perſwaſions upon.

I will therefore, as a Supplement to all I have ſaid, Firſt recollect what I have intended all along. And then caſt all, I can poſſibly ſuppoſe againſt it, into *Objections* and *Anſwers*, that by cloſer attention to the Caſe it ſelf, every one that will be at the coſt to conſider it, may be convinced to the main End, *viz.* A preſent Religious Life.

1. Firſt then I make it not the queſtion, Whether a true Repentance, how late ſoever, be a Repentance to Salvation?

2. Nor Secondly, Whether God hath reſerved it to the Prerogative of his Grace, to give a true Repentance at laſt?

3. Nor Thirdly, Whether a Repentance that is true and ſincere, though but in the Seeds, being ſurprized with a Death-Bed, may not then break out and ſhew it ſelf more fully?

4. Nor Laſtly, Whether a Man that hath the light of the Goſpel brought to him, but juſt before his Dying Condition, may not expect the Grace of God working with it then, even as in the freer times of Life?

All theſe I do with great Confidence acknowledge: The Subſtance of what I have ſaid againſt a *Death-Bed Repentance*, will be compriſed in theſe following

following Aſſertions, which I reſtrain wholly to Men, that have lived under the Light, and Exhortations, and Applications of the Word of God, with all uſual Freedom; and yet have not begun ſincerely to Repent, till they come to die.

The Firſt is, That a *Death-Bed Repentance* how fair ſoever, it may appear, hath yet the greateſt Doubt imaginable upon it, whether it be true.

The Second, There is greateſt Reaſon of Fear, God will not give his Grace to ſuch a Dying Man, to Repent.

The Third, That a Repentance at Death is not that *general Repentance*, the Scripture Diſcourſes of, makes promiſes of Pardon upon, offers the Aſſiſtances of the Spirit to, enjoins the Duty of, with ſo many preſſing commands. For that Repentance immediately to be begun is ſuppoſed to govern a following Life. It muſt therefore be an extraordinary, and miraculous Repentance, if true.

Laſtly, That it is therefore againſt all rules of Piety and Prudence, by miſpending Life to caſt our ſelves upon the neceſſity of Repentance at Death.

This, I ſay, is the Subſtance of what I have deſigned all along, and which I would now further clear, and vindicate from theſe following Objections.

Objection 1. Doth not the Parable of calling ſome Labourers into the Vineyard at the Eleventh Hour, imply, That God doth in ordinary Convert ſome at the laſt Hour, as well as ſooner? Mat. 20. v. 1. &c.

Anſwer. The main ſcope of Parables is only argumentative, and *ſo far as the ſcope of* that Parable relates to this Caſe: It is no more, than what I acknowledge, That God gives Eternal Life to true

Repentance, if true, at laſt, even as to the firſt and earlieſt Repentance. The reward being to all of *Grace, and not of Debt*. It is alſo to be conſidered, there remained an Hour of working, repreſenting rather old Age, than a Death-Bed, if the colours of a Parable prove any thing, and ſo are rather againſt this Repentance, than for it.

In the *Second Objection*, I ſuppoſe Men taking Sanctuary at infinite Mercy and Power in this manner.

Although no thought of Man can reach the Mercy, that accepts or gives Repentance at the laſt: yet Mercy being as much above our Thoughts, as the Heaven above the Earth, what can we define concerning it? And though there are ſo many Circumſtances of Impoſſibility, according to our meaſure of things; Yet the things that are impoſſible with Men, with God are poſſible; for with God all things are poſſible: How can we then determine in this Caſe? *Can we by ſearching find out the Almighty* in his Mercy and Power? *Can we find him out to perfection? It is high as Heaven, what can we do? It is deeper than Hell, what can we know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.*

Anſwer. Now becauſe in this *Objection*, the ſinews of all Hope and Expectation from this late Repentance meet; I will endeavour to give the moſt punctual *Anſwer* to it. And though I know after all, that is, or can be ſaid, Men will not quit it: Yet I ſhall reſt upon this *Anſwer*, as my laſt Reſolution of this Caſe; and by it raiſe the diſſwaſions from a truſt in ſuch a Repentance to the height; the greatneſs of the hazard appearing moſt fully from it.

In

In general therefore it hath been noted, The queſtion is not whether God accepts a true Repentance, how late ſoever; but whether God will give a true Repentance ſo late; and herein the queſtion is not of the limits the abſolute limits of infinite Mercy and Power; But what limits it hath ſet to it ſelf? and what Seaſons it hath limited to us? and whether according to theſe a *Death-Bed Repentance* be not almoſt, if not altogether an Impoſſibility? I'll therefore lay down ſeveral degrees of Impoſſibility, notwithſtanding infinite Mercy and Power, that muſt neceſſarily abate the Irregular Confidence of ſuch a Repentance, and under one of them I ſhall be bold to place it.

1. The higheſt degree of Impoſſibility is, of thoſe things, that are utterly and abſolutely *impoſſible with God*, becauſe they are irreconcileable with his Nature, and ſuch wherein if they were, *he muſt deny himſelf*, which he cannot do. For though there is nothing above God, not ſo much as any Goodneſs, or Righteouſneſs abſtracted from himſelf, that ſhould give him Law; Yet he being himſelf that ſupreme Goodneſs and Righteouſneſs, He is a Law to himſelf; His Nature is his ſupreme and inviolable Law; And his Will ſtands always even with his Nature: For his Will is himſelf reciprocal with his Nature; And all his Actions keep perfect Correſpondence with his Will. Upon this immutable Reaſon *God cannot lye*, he cannot do any thing weak, or that argues Imperfection: He cannot but be righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Upon this Reaſon alſo he cannot, *he will not acquit the guilty*. He cannot, he will not ſave or make Men happy in their Sins. God himſelf ſpeaks this Senſe,

Sense, *Ezek.* 18. 31, 32. and *c.* 33. 11. *As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, why will ye die? Turn your selves and live ye.* As if he should say, except ye turn, all my Mercy can do you no good. For such a Mercy as God the *Father* of *Mercies*, will not give, would not be a Mercy, but either a foolish Softness, or loose Indulgence to Sin. Such a Power were not a Power, but an Impotency, or turning all things to Confusion. These therefore are as inconsistent with God, as Folly, Imperfection, Sin. The Gospel, the highest display of Mercy rests upon this Principle, being not a Salvation of Men in Sin, but a most effectual Redemption of Men from Sin. Of all that God can be supposed to do for Men, there is nothing more impossible than this, more repugnant to all the true Sense of Man, more overthrowing of the undertaking of Christ, more contrary to the Nature of true Happiness. An Opinion of the damned in Hell being annihilated, or recovered to Holiness and Happiness after some Ages of Torment, were a high Probability compar'd with this. He that can tempt himself to believe this, may believe any thing, and needs no Confutation, but his own Unreasonableness. Against this I have been thus large, because it secretly lurks in Mens Hearts, that God may save them without so much ado about Faith and Repentance, though being afraid to speak a thing so monstrous, they disguise it under the Pretence of a faint Repentance at last.

But from what I have said, It is plainly to be inferred, First, That some things which God cannot, will not do, are not the reproach either of his Mercy or Power, but the Glory and Greatness of both. And this, that He neither can, or will save Men without

without ſincere Faith and Repentance (that is without a recovery to Holineſs) is one of theſe things. The *Death-Bed Repentance* then, that is *unto Salvation*, muſt without all diſpute be a ſincere Change from Sin to Holineſs.

2. There is an Impoſſibility, that ariſes from the peremptory, and abſolute, and irrepealable determination of the Will and Council of God concerning any thing. In this degree of things I account, * *the unpardonableneſs of the Sin againſt the Divine Spirit. The unrenewableneſs of total Apoſtates from Chriſtianity to Repentance. The impoſſibility of Repentance after this Life*: Now though theſe carry not their own Evidence of being inconſiſtent with the Divine Nature, as the former; yet the Declaration of ſupreme pleaſure againſt them is ſo effectual, that we muſt needs look upon them, as impoſſible. And we may ſee a great conſent, a high Congruity between the things themſelves, and the Determination of God concerning them, which Reaſons are yet clearer with God. For in the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt there is ſo mature, ſo perfect, ſo concocted a Wickedneſs, ſo high a contumely againſt the Godhead it ſelf, that it is very irreconcileable with Repentance, and ſo with Pardon. The total Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity, and the Evidences of it mentioned *Heb.* 6. from the very Nature of the Caſe appears irreparable, becauſe there is no other or higher Grace, than that of the Goſpel, for the Apoſtates to remove to; *no more ſacrifice for ſin*, nor are there

* *I cannot acquieſce in the Expoſition of the Learned Dr.* Hammond *in his Annotations concerning theſe two Caſes.*

there any higher Evidences of that Gospel, than those he is supposed to revolt from; and no more perfect Acts of Contrariety to the Gospel, than *the crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting him to an open shame, the doing despite to the Spirit of Grace, the treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the Blood of the Covenant an unclean thing, in the Parallel place.* Heb. 10. 29.

Besides all other Reasons, the unchangeable State of Eternity is so consolidate with, so fixed into our very Being, that the Perpetuity of it is very accountable to our Reason; so that there can be no Change after this Life.

From hence then, we derive thus much farther against a *Death-Bed Repentance:* First that some things, wherein we cannot find an express Impossibility in their Nature, are yet made so by Gods absolute Resolution concerning them; into the Reason of which he also is pleased to give us some light: And that many Expressions of Scripture (as, *They shall seek me early but shall not find me*, the Parable of the foolish Virgins, with many others) make this Repentance very dangerous, with which also the very Reason of the Case concurs; Yet not amounting to this kind of Impossibility.

3. There are some things impossible according to the Rules, and general Laws of the Creation, and Government of the World, which we call Nature, and which Rules, infinite Wisdom and Power hath so prescribed to it self, that he hath yet reserved to himself freedom to shew himself above them, as Founder and Lord of Nature.

Thus it is impossible for the Sun to stand still, to raise the Dead, that the Fire should not burn: That

is,

is, It is impoſſible at all times, but when infinite Power is pleaſed to be ſeen riding in the Heavens, far above all Nature, that is, when he is pleaſed to work Miracles: ſuitable to theſe Laws of the firſt Creation, there are alſo Laws of the new and ſecond Creation, *viz.* the Redemption of Chriſt.

It is true, the new Creation, compared with the old, is ſo far as it is new, *All Miracle.* Such is *Righteouſneſs without Works*, Regeneration; Such is the Incarnation, the Reſurrection. Even as Rom. 4. 6.
the firſt Creation and daily Preſervation are Miracles compared with *that nothing*, out of which all things were drawn, and are ſtill upheld.

Yet this very miraculous Frame of the Goſpel is bounded with certain Laws and Rules, and when theſe are tranſcended, it is a Miracle in this miraculous ſtate of things.

Now all Inſtances of miraculous Power are rare and extraordinary, and the Reaſons of them, when they have been, have always been great and ſolemn; and when they have been more plentiful in any Age, the Reaſons have been great for that alſo. And in Miracle it ſelf, there hath been always regard to the natural ſtate of things. Miracle hath for the moſt part lifted up Nature only, wherein it was either decayed, or not planted ſo high, as the very effect to be wrought, and juſt then deſigned; not minding the flouriſh of it ſelf, but the main Intention only: We read of no other Circumſtances but thoſe of ordinary Mortality, into which they that were raiſed from the Dead in Scripture were exalted; only that they were raiſed to Life.

In the new Creation, ſo much of the old, as would ſerve in it, is generally taken in; and the Con-

Conſtitutions that will agree with the deſign of Grace are upheld for the moſt part; as were eaſie to manifeſt. Divine Inſpiration did not diſannul the natural Temper of the Prophets or Apoſtles; but they are eaſily obſervable in their Writings. Converſion doth not deſtroy, but ſanctifie and renew Nature. For what doth all this ſerve, but to ſhew, God does as little as may be, decline from the firſt Model of things, His Wiſdom ſo deeply contrived?

Further, the new Creation in all things excelling the old; as the whole State of it is never antiquated by a higher Revelation, ſo the Laws of it are ſeldom exceeded by any thing extraordinary; yet I acknowledge, Inſtances there are of Extraordinaries, even here alſo.

The Apoſtleſhip was in a manner wholly miraculous, yet the calling of the Apoſtle *Paul* was ſomething higher than that; for whereas the Twelve were trained, and educated in the Diſcipline and Converſation of Chriſt; and expreſs care in the Surrogation of one into the place of *Judas*, was had of ſuch a Preparation, yet the Apoſtle *Paul* was ſuddenly born into that high Function and Authority, into which they were gradually admitted. But the reaſon alſo was very high, That there might be ſo great a Proof of the Power of the Goſpel, as a Perſecutor and Blaſphemer Preaching that Faith, he had ſo notoriouſly perſecuted; and on the ſudden, that it might be without the Suſpicion of a Confederacy.

Acts 1. 21, 22.

Acts 9. 20, 21, 22. 31. Gal. 1. 23, 24.

His

His very Converſion was a Superabundance of *Abundant Grace*: He was not only in a deep Humility of Expreſſion, but in the thing it ſelf, one of the *chiefeſt of Sinners* ſaved by Chriſt: His Sin had been the unpardonable Sin, had not *Ignorance* abated it.

1 Tim. 1. 14. ὑπερπλεόνασε ἡ χάρις.

1 Tim. 1. 15. *verſ.* 13.

But upon that ſolemn account *he obtained mercy*; *That in Him Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth a Pattern of all long-ſuffering*, 1 Tim. 1. *verſ.* 16.

This of the Dying Malefactor, I eſteem of the ſame kind, and the Reaſon was extraordinary, as I have before obſerved.

I have now thus fully diſcourſed this Particular, becauſe it brings me to the ultimate Reſolution, I can make of this Caſe; that is,

A *Death-Bed Repentance* whenever it is true, is a Grace and Favour vouchſafed to the Soul, in which it is found, above the ordinary and general Grace that gives Repentance. For it is above theſe four great Rules of the Goſpel, wherein alſo the fundamental Nature of things much conſpires.

1. That God is jealous of the Glory of his Grace, and gives it by the ſame rule, he preſcribes to us. *To day, while it is called to day, hear his Voice.*

2. God attempers his Grace to the ſtate of Man's Soul, ſo as not to permit to ſuch a long hardning, and accuſtomedneſs in Sin, thoſe whom he intends to Convert.

3. The Ingenuity and Freedom of the Soul neceſſary to Repentance is not ordinarily poſſible, amidſt the Fears and Neceſſity of Death.

4. *Fruits meet for Repentance, and amendment Life, and the glorifying God upon Earth,* by a holy Converſation are univerſally required. Such a Repentance then muſt be proportionable to *a Miracle, a Miracle in Grace.* Now Miracles are ſeldom, and not but upon ſuch Reaſons as exceed the value of thoſe Rules (at leaſt) in that Caſe, wherein they are over-ruled; Reaſons of greater Eminency than what daily fall out; but it is a daily Reaſon, that Men muſt either Repent or Periſh. Such Repentances therefore are very rare, and doubtleſs when they are. God gives a luſtre to the Reaſons why they are; In ſuch a meaſure, that Men may ſay, *Here is the finger of God,* ingraving his Wiſdom upon his Work. And with ſuch a Freedom as our Saviour expreſſes, *Luke* 4. 25, 26, 27.

The practical Concluſion then from hence is this, It is as preſumptuous a *Boaſt* for a Man to think, He ſhall Repent when he comes to die, becauſe the Mercy and Power of God are infinite; as for him upon the ſame accounts, to leap into Seas, or roll himſelf in Flames, without fear of danger.

Prov. 27. 1.

Nay, It is ſuch a kind of prophane Inſolency, as ſome Interpreters give that of *Lamech* to be, *Though I ſhould ſlay a Man in my anger, or a Young-man in my Senſe of an Injury: Yet if* Cain *notwithſtanding his Murther, was ſecured by a ſevenfold Vengeance from God upon him, that ſhould ſlay him, I ſhall be ſecured in mine, by a Vengeance ſeventy ſevenfold.* Thus Men ſay, if ever any one for all an irreligious Life, was preſerved from Hell by a Repentance at laſt,

Gen. 4. 23. Paræus *in locum.*

laſt, I need not fear, but I ſhall: Both agree in a bold claim of the Sovereign actings of God for their own ſafety in Sin.

4. Below all theſe Impoſſibilities; as in Nature there are great difficulties, that are not uſually overcome, and yet in things poſſible without a Miracle; ſo there are alſo in Grace. Our Saviour tells us, *It is eaſier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Mat. 19. 23, &c. *His prejudices and prepoſſeſſions are ſo many, his temptations and intanglements are ſo great.* The Prophet ſays, *Can a Blackamore change his skin? or a Leopard his ſpots? then ye that are accuſtomed to do evil, may learn to do well.* Jer. 13. 23. All delay'd Repentances are very uneaſie; ſome Divines obſerving few Converſions after the fortieth Year of Life. But of theſe, though all Men ought to apprehend the danger; I ſhould ſay, (that no Man might be inſnared) as our Saviour ſpeaks in theſe Caſes, *The things impoſſible with Men, with God are poſſible.*

Objection 3. But according to this ſtate of the Caſe, What ſhould a Dying Man do, that hath not yet repented? Should he expect a Miracle, or do nothing through deſpair?

Anſwer. Have ye not read, what *David* did when he was an hungry and had need? He adventured over Laws, and was blameleſs: If any Man feel the neceſſities of a Soul periſhing, let him lay hold upon Mercy and Grace to help. There is a Faith in this Caſe, like the Faith of Miracles, that removes Mountains, and divides Seas. *He that can receive it, let*

him receive it, Mat. 19. 12. But let every Man take heed how he falls into these Necessities; For multitudes not having the right Faith, *like the* Egyptians, *Essay this*, and are drowned, *Heb.* 11. 29.

It is a very hard thing to distinguish between *mirum*, and *miraculum*, a Wonder, and a Miracle; so is it between a saving Faith, and Repentance that may have wonderful effects, through the Conviction of a Death-Bed, and this true saving Faith, this Faith of Miracles; and for any thing I know, Eternity only can make a Man safe concerning it, and sure that he had it. Doubtless many like *Joab* perish, catching hold of the Horns of the Altar.

Objection 4. But what? If Men having made a Profession of Religion, have done many things religiously and soberly, and yet through the prevalency of some Lusts, it appears they have not truly repented? May not the Conversation they have had with Religion, so prepare things, that their Repentance may be dispatched in the Instants of Death?

Answer 1. It is dreadful to consider, how the unhappy pleas of some upon such kind of accounts recited by Christ, are also rejected by him. *Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets? In thy Name have we cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works. Yet he shall profess unto them, I never knew you, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity.*

Luk. 13. 26, &c.

Mat. 7. 22.

Besides all the Doubts already insisted upon, such Men have made a Custom of deluding Religion, and have great cause to fear they should do so at last.

God

God alſo is *ſo provoked by ſuch*, as have *long tempted him, proved him, and ſeen his works, and yet err from him in their hearts, and do not know his ways, that he comes to his oath againſt them*, Heb. 3. 9, 10.

Anſw. 2. But leſt this ſhould diſcourage and ſuffocate all motions after God, either in Life or at Death; and they ſeem in as good condition, that never mind Religion, as thoſe that do: I add,

Any good thing found in Men, either in their Life or Death, though it have not the worthineſs of *Repentance to Salvation*, yet ſhall certainly *have its reward* in mitigations of Puniſhment; which Conſideration fully explained at the Day of Judgment will aſſoyl many of this ſort of Doubts concerning the ways of God. I believe thoſe *very early ſeekings* of God, notwithſtanding which, he is ſaid *to laugh at the Deſtruction* of thoſe, from whom they come, when they have firſt ſerved the gloryings of Juſtice, obtain leſſenings of Pain: as conquered Enemies, after they have been led in Triumph to wait on the Conqueror's Glory, may have even that Service recompenſed with a more compaſſionate Captivity.

Anſwer 3. If there have been ſolidity and ſincerity in any religious Exerciſes in the time of Life, whereby the Heart by the Grace of God is prepared for further Grace; as very often Converſion is by degrees: It is hopeful God may uſe Death, as a Seaſon of compleating his Work; yet this is to be regiſtred among the ſeldomer diſpoſes of God, and both thoſe Preparations, and the Complement of them is under the caution of our Saviour: *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait-gate, for many, I ſay unto you, ſhall ſeek to enter, and ſhall not be able*, Luke 13. 24.

Objection 5. Is it not at all times a great Folly, to promiſe *a to morrow* to Repentance, how long ſoever we may live after that to morrow? becauſe we daily *harden through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* Is it not alſo always a curious Point, and that requires a great jealouſie over it, whether our Hearts are at any time ſincere in returns to God? Is it not laſtly, always to be feared, leſt our *to day*, the time of Grace ſlip from us? Why then are the dangers p'aced ſo induſtriouſly upon this Repentance at Death?

Anſwer 1. Firſt as concerning the time of Repentance, It is to be acknowledged; Every Man, that is come to the ſtrength and fixedneſs of his Underſtanding, to the poize and inclination of his Will and Affections, to the habit and cuſtom of his Life and Actions, and hath not determined for God, hath great reaſon to fear; leſt as there is a deep print of the high hand of Nature upon his unconverted ſtate, ſo there ſhould be a Seal of Juſtice alſo, and this Doubt increaſes every day.

Notwithſtanding this; All Doubts and Scruples, that have an appearance of inſnaring and intangling the minds of Men with fears, they begin too late, are to be avoided; if it be not ſo late, that it is *juſt now dark, and their feet ſtumbling*
Jer. 13. 16. *upon the dark mountains*; And
theſe things being written eſpecially
Iſa. 38. 19. for the *living*, who have in ordinary probability time to loſe, the danger is beſt placed here, where it takes them every way.

By the way of Encouragement; that the time is not yet paſt, while they have the ſpaces of Life, and of the Patience of God; which is not *a ſlackneſs of Juſtice*, but *a deſigned Salvation.* By the way of

Cau-

Caution, becauſe they know not how ſoon they may be caſt upon a Death-Bed, and this Patience be at an end: With Dying Men the caſe is otherwiſe, who are already in the thickeſt of the Danger, and muſt work themſelves out in that moment, or periſh for ever; without any Injury therefore to them, *the living* are thus to be warned. *Iſa.* 38. 19.

Further, It is evident, all delays of Repentance roll down hither, however Men propoſe a ſtop; yet hither the generality come at laſt: So that in effect, it is all one, whether Men are diſſwaded from truſting to a Dying Repentance, or from delaying their Repentance. For if they are given to delay; It comes to this, They repent and die together. But if a Man be afraid to venture Eternity upon his laſt Breath, he will repent preſently.

2. For the difficulty of being ſincere in Repentance, I place it here, becauſe, though every Man ſhould by drawing the parallel lines of Deluſion, and miſtake upon himſelf, try his Repentance when ever it is; yet theſe Errors fall in greateſt numbers upon that point of Extremity, and with leaſt poſſibility of rectifying them: But ſeeing there are at all times ſuch deceits in this Caſe, there is nothing ſo neceſſary, as to repent in a clear light, and full leiſure.

3. For the ſeverity of God in denying his Grace, though I acknowledge his Indignation condemns many, who have dallied with him and their own Souls to be ſuck'd in again by the whir-pool of their Luſts, when they would have riſen out of them; yet this Indignation is never ſo certainly at the height, as when Men have provoked it as long as they could: It is moſt miſerable therefore to make our laſt motions within the command of ſuch a hor-

rible Pit, leſt they prove only the ſtruggles of ſinking Men: yet this we muſt do, if we are not before got out of it. There is much greater hope (how bad ſoever their Condition may be) to them, who are yet in the hand *of patience lifting and*
Rom. 2. 4. *leading them to Repentance, and*
2 Pet. 3. 9. *do not deſpiſe it, but account it Salvation.*

Objection 6. This Doctrin does not favor enough of the Grace of the Goſpel, that would have all Men come to Repentance.

Anſw. To diſcourſe the Severities of the Goſpel, to the ends of the Goſpel, is moſt Evangelical Diſcourſe. For as the Goſpel doth with all clearneſs declare its own Rigors, that Men might not miſtake it, for a looſe and careleſs Doctrin, and ſo miſs the Salvation of it; ſo have I diſcovered the great hazard of a Dying Repentance, that Living Men might be perſwaded not to caſt themſelves upon it, and Dying Men excited to an Action ſuitable to the extremity of their Caſe.

And this is indeed preaching the Goſpel; and to be moved *upon it with fear, to prepare an Ark to the ſaving our Souls* before the flood
Heb. 11. 7. come, is as true an effect of Faith, *as to be conſtrained by love to live*
2 Cor. 5. 14. *to him, that hath* died for us. I ſay as true, and gives us a Title to the *Inheritance of the Righteouſneſs, which is by Faith*, together with the other. For the Prudence of Faith makes us apprehenſive of the Reaſons of Danger, and ſo to Fear, even as the Gratitude of it ties us with the Obligations of Love. This is not that Fear that Love caſts out, but that it ſelf quickens,

and

and is also both quickned and guarded by it: nor *is it the bondage, but the wisdom of Fear.* Rom. 8. 15. Job 28. 28.

Objection 7. But is the general Judgment of Divines thus?

Answer. All judicious Divines are very tender of binding the Prerogative of Grace, or clipping off the Action of Men towards God, even at this time; in Observation whereof I have desired to be cautious herein also: But in their cautions against Presumption, their Expressions amount to the utmost I have spoken.

See, besides the concurring Judgment of the Ancients, Bishop Andrews *Sermons on Repentance. Dr.* Hammond *and Dr.* Taylor *in their Treatises of this Point.* Bolton, Dyke, &c.

Infer. 1. But setting aside the whole danger of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, Let me now lastly thus reason, and thus expostulate; Why should we desire to Repent so late? It is good to be betimes doing that which is most comporting with our truest Happiness; Reconciliation with God, return to Him, his Favour, to obey Him; these are the truest Freedom and Peace of a Man at all times: *Great Peace have they which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.* He lives in the least pain, that lives holiest; *I made haste therefore and delayed not to keep thy Commandments*; I seized upon so great an Enjoyment, as soon as I could, afraid to be kept off from it too long. Psal. 119. 165. Psal. 119. 60.

To fear God and keep his Commandments is the whole duty of Man, Eccles. 12. 13. When a Man

conſiders Life, and that he hath but a Moment of it, and that therefore he would live that Moment, as much as may be he;ſhall find the higheſt of Life, the top of Life to be *Godlineſs, which hath all the promiſes of this life, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. 4. 8.

To purſue this World, and the Vanities of it is not only with greateſt folly, and impertinency to lanch our ſelves in a great Veſſel, the Greatneſs of our Affection; and with ſolemn Preparations, our ſtrongeſt Action, into the low water, the ſhallow of Life; which becauſe it cannot carry ſo great a bulk, increaſes the Toyl and Vexation, as well as enhanſes the Vanity and Folly of doing nothing at ſo great an expenſe: But worſe than this, it is the loading our ſelves with guilt under a deluſion of Pleaſure; that gives us ſecret diſquiet and torment, while we are laying it on;and cannot be laid down as we pleaſe; but with more ſenſible and induſtrious Anguiſh,than we heap'd it upon us, I mean, the ſenſe of our miſdoings, and Contrition for them, ſo neceſſary *to work Repentance*.

To conclude, Seeing *to die is the end of all Men*, Eccleſ. 7. 2. Repentance is to be choſen while we live, that we may die with the greateſt quiet; without thoſe Agonies of Conſcience, thoſe cold Sweats, thoſe ſinking Eyes, and fainting Spirits; for he dies with moſt eaſe, that moſt ſurveys Death, and looks into all the Retirements of it before-hand; that knows it perfectly, and all its ſtrength; ſuch an one governs himſelf in it, as in a moſt important Action with Decency and Freedom. He is not hal'd by Death, but received by it: *Into*

Luke 23. 46. *thy hands I commend my ſpirit*; he lays

lays himſelf orderly into the ſhade of Death: Whereas ſo long adherence to the Pleaſures of Sin gives Death a Violence. It makes Men both unwilling, and afraid to die. *This night thy Soul ſhall be required.* Life is exacted of a Luke 12. 20.
Senſualiſt, and torn from him, that
is reſigned by a Spiritual and Mortified Man; Good Men die in an active Senſe, they know how to die; others die paſſively, they are forced to die.

This great difference prefers to us Dying daily, before that forcible Dying at once.

The wiſdom of Dying was accounted by Heathens one of the worthy Buſineſſes and Imployments of Life, and that required much ſtudy. Chriſtianity gives us the true Rules of it, and they lie *in waiting till our change come; Time is ſhort, they therefore that uſe* this 1 Cor. 7. 29.
World, ſhould not uſe it down to
the Bran, ſenſually; but only take the advantages of it to a higher Life: Elſe being met on the ſudden by Death, they are like thoſe that fall off from Life with Violence, that is, Headlong; but they that live in the Senſe of God, and an Eternal Condition, alight with care and eaſe.

It is therefore not only greateſt Safety, but trueſt Frugality and Improvement of Life to Repent betimes; and when we come to die, the eaſieſt and ſweeteſt way of dying. Not indeed a Dying, but a Tranſlation into Immortality and Bleſſedneſs.

Inference 2. Seeing the *Wiſe*, and *their works are all in the hand of God*; and that he giveth *Wiſdom* to *the Wiſe Man's Heart*, to *diſcern* both *Time* and *Judgment*; and not to be *taken* as *Fiſhes* in an *evil Net*, and as *Birds in a Snare*, when it falls ſudden-

ly

upon them, having *not known their time*; Let us moſt humbly commit our ſelves to Him by earneſt ſeeking his Grace in the Redeemer, in whom all his Grace is Treaſur'd up; Thus by the Efficacy of his Spirit we ſhall *know in our day, the things of our Peace*, that *they may not be for ever hid from our Eyes; we ſhall ſeek the Lord, while he is to be found*, and *call upon him while he is near*: And ſo ſhall be ſecured from having the *Door ſhut* upon us.

Infer. 4. This may be to us a cloſe and determinative Teſt in this point of *Death-Bed Repentance*; If our Repentance be ſuch, and ſo real; that it is not a *Lamp* of Profeſſion only, but *Oyl in the Veſſel*, that will bear up the *going forth to meet the Bride-Groom*; and that we are ready, and have not our *Oyl to Buy*, but can *enter* with *Him* into *the Wedding*, before the *Door be ſhut*; This, how late ſoever it may ſeem, is *Repentance to Salvation, and not to be Repented of*, and ſhall be with *Chriſt in Paradiſe*.

Such a Repentance, when the Spirit goes out of the Body, will be before-hand entred *into that within the Veil*; whether the *Fore-runner being for us entred* Miniſters in the *Holy of Holies*, not made with Hands; in that *Sanctuary*, which the *Lord* hath *pitched*, and *not Man*; in that *more perfect Tabernacle*; *that is to ſay, not of this Building*; a *High-Prieſt for ever, after the Order of Melchiſedec*; a *Saviour to the utmoſt, or to All Perfection*. He fills up with the valew of his own *Sacrifice* and *Interceſſion*, and by the *Power of his Endleſs Life*, whatever is wanting in the Repentance, He hath given; either in regard of its Valew as being ſo Late, and in the Re-

ſuſe

fuſe of Life; or of the deep Rooting and Habituation, or of the abundant Fruits: and having *Apprehended*, the Spirit He enables it *in a Moment*, in *the twinkling of an Eye*, every way enables it to *Apprehend that ſtate* of Holineſs, which agrees to the Reſurrection of the Dead; firſt in the Life of Spirits with Himſelf; then in the Raiſing the *Body Incorruptible*. For this appertains to his *Melchiſedecian Prieſt-hood*, wherein He is now; and wherein He is *King of Righteouſneſs*, *King of Peace*, a *Prieſt* ſet *down on the Right Hand of the Majeſty on High*.

If therefore the Repentance be ſuch, as He, as this *Great Prince* hath given; There is in it a *Coming to God by Him*, and then his *Salvation* is to all *Perfection* to it; For as going into the Heavens in his Spirit, He took in his Paſſage this Prey, the Dying Malefactor out of the Mouth of the Lyon; So as He pleaſes, out of the ſame Power, the *power of the Dog*, He reſcues thoſe Souls that he hath made dear to Himſelf; for He living ever, quickens whom He will, and He can by his Spirit ſeal this his Grace in a Moment.

For this *Great High Prieſt-Hood*, being the *Eternal Prieſt-Hood of Chriſt*; whatever is ſaid of Him, as a *High-Prieſt*, muſt be ſaid of Him, as this *High-Prieſt*; which He is alway, or without leaſt Intermiſſion: And as ſuch an *High-Prieſt* therefore it is, that He *ſuccours the Tempted*, being in *All things Tempted*, as we are, yet without Sin; now even as his Great *Temptation* was at *Death*; yet without the Sin of having deferred his *ſtrong Cries* and *Supplications* to Death, though then He was moſt Earneſt: He can there-

fore

fore Succour, and be infinitely Compaſſionate, even to thoſe who are Tempted, though with, and in this Sin of having delay'd Repentance to the laſt. They therefore, whom He graciouſly moves to it, may *come*, even then, *boldly to the Throne of Grace*, and *obtain Mercy*, and *find Grace*, even in this *juſt Seaſon*, and as it were indiviſible Point of Time: *Theſe Things I write*, that we may *not Sin* this *Great Sin of Delaying our Repentance* to the laſt; But if any Man do *ſo Sin*, we have this *Great High-Prieſt over the Houſe of God*; an *Advocate*, and a *Propitiation*; and if ſuch a one be under his Charge, and *given to Him* by God, He is a *Faithful* and a *Merciful High-Prieſt*: He is therefore Faithful, becauſe Merciful to make *Reconciliation*, and to Succour in ſo great a Temptation, as even This is: This He can do, becauſe He is a Fore runner within the Veil; and by his Blood appears, as he that hath obtained Eternal Redemption, a Redemption always ready.

This is the great Security and Cordial againſt the Fear of Death in general, to the Saints and Servants of Chriſt; and if by its *Hyper-Pleonaſm*, its exceeding Abundance, and Affluence, it may and does over-flow to ſome, upon whom the *Grace of Chriſt Abounds*, much more where *Sin* hath ſo much *Abounded*: How great is this Miracle of Grace! But who? How few are they who ſhall thus Live? whom God and Chriſt will pleaſe to make thus to Live, When it is come to this; for if they are *Few* that are *Saved*, how much *Fewer* are the *Saved*, at this laſt Point.

Strive

Strive then to enter betimes at the ſtrait Gate; for many ſhall then *ſeek*; *at laſt of any Time*; *to enter in, and ſhall not be Able.*

There is too much of (eſpecially the Death-Bed) Repentance, at is Repentance of the *Lamp* only, that makes a ſhew only; that is but only of this World, and from beneath; which is able for once to give or yield a fair and lightſome Flaſh at parting with the World: But becauſe without a Treaſure to Enter into an Eternal Duration, That which is but a *Lamp*, fails in the very time of Tryal, and becomes *a Lamp put out in obſcure Darkneſs.* Let your Lamps be always Shining, and your Lights Burning, ſuch as are Able to be always ſo, and ſo to Shine even into Eternity.

Infer. 5. From what hath been ſpoken concerning the Great *Mourning* and *Repentance*, that ſhall be before the End of this ſtate of the World; even before the *pouring out of the Vials*, in that Miraculous ſtate of Things, that ſhall be after the *Apoſtacy* ended, and the *Kingdom of Chriſt* in Succeſſion; I conclude there ſhall be a *Death-Bed Repentance* of the World, if I may ſo call it; but after that, *viz.* in the time of the *Vials* we read of no *Repenting*, but a *Repenting not*; no more than in the ſtate of *Everlaſting Puniſhment*, in our general Apprehenſion of that State: even as *He that is Righteous*, ſhall be *Righteous ſtill*, that is, for ever *Righteous*, and in no poſſibility of for ever Falling from it; any more than from the Glory, and Happineſs of Eternity, in our General Notion of that State.

And

And this ſtrongly Argues to us the Poſſibilities of a *Death-Bed Repentance*; ſeeing all the Prejudices that lie upon and againſt a *Death-Bed-Repentance* now, lie againſt that late Repentance of the World; but yet it limits and guards againſt the Ordinarineſs and Eaſineſs of a *Death-Bed Repentance* in General; in as much as this late Repentance is in a miraculous ſtate of things, *viz.* of the *Spirit poured* out; of ſuch a Glorious *Kingdom of Chriſt* come into its Succeſſion; and at the time when *our Lord* ſhall immediately *Come in his Kingdom.*

But then at the ſame time is cut off all poſſibility of Repentance after this Seaſon of Repentance; For as ſoon as the time of the Vials enters, all poſſibility of Repentance is fore-doom'd, as hath been ſaid.

Now this Late Repentance ſhall be excited and ſtirred up to by the *Preaching* of the *Everlaſting Goſpel*; and of this there were two great *Symbols* or *Figures* given in the very firſt Appearance of the Goſpel, *viz.* the *Apoſtleſhip* of *Paul*, who was, as hath been obſerved, *Born out of due Time* into that High *Miſſion*; agreeable to which is the *Preaching of the Everlaſting Goſpel*: and the *Repentance* of the *Dying Malefactor*, juſt as Chriſt was *entring into his Kingdom*; And they are each a *Hypotypoſis*, or *Pattern* for them who ſhall *Hereafter Believe on Him to Life Everlaſting*; and *Repent* with *the Repentance to Salvation*,

tion, never to *be Repented of*; and eſpecially at that Great Futurity of the *Coming* and *Kingdom of Chriſt*, or the *Coming of Chriſt in his Kingdom.*

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